UNIT
ENFIELD

SERMONS

FOR THE USE OF

FAMILIES.

Quid verum atque decens curo, et rogo, et omnis in hoc sum.

HOR.

SERMONS

FOR THE USE OF

FAMILIES.

BY

WILLIAM ENFIELD.

LONDON:
Printed for J. JOHNSON, No. 8. Pater-noſter-Row.
MDCCLXVIII.

PREFACE.

A Young Author cannot make his firſt appearance in the venerable preſence of the PUBLIC, without being anxious for a favourable reception, nor, if he has any degree of modeſty, without diffidence and fear. He muſt be deſirous of obtaining the approbation of the Judicious, and, at the ſame time, concerned, leſt he ſhould not have been able to acquit himſelf in ſuch a manner, as to deſerve it.

This the Author of the following Diſcourſes acknowledges to be the

ſtate

ſtate of mind, in which he ventures them into the world. He profeſſes himſelf a candidate for the public Eſteem; and he makes his firſt attempt to gain it, in this form, becauſe he thinks, that a man is never more likely to become acceptable and uſeful to mankind, than by exerting himſelf in his own peculiar province. He doubts not, but that his Friends and the Public will give him all the indulgence, which is due to the *firſt* performance of a *young man*.

But, if even that indulgence ſhould not be ſufficient to reſcue his work from oblivion, he will ſtill have the ſatisfaction to reflect, that he has employed his beſt abilities in the ſervice

vice of Virtue — that he has written, not to ſupport the intereſts of a party — not to amuſe his Readers with uſeleſs ſpeculations — not to revive thoſe Theological Debates, which might, without much loſs to the world, be entirely forgotten — but *to do good.*

CONTENTS.

SERMON I.

The Notice of the World a Motive to Virtue.

MATTHEW v. 14.

A City that is ſet on an Hill cannot be hid. Page 3.

SERMON II.

On Domeſtic Peace.

GENESIS xlv. 24.

See that ye fall not out by the Way. Page 29.

SERMON III.

Againſt Fraud.

LEVITICUS xix. 13.

Thou ſhalt not defraud thy Neighbour. P. 53.

SERMON IV.

On Bigotry.

JOHN iv. 9.

The Jews *have no Dealings with the* Samaritans. Page 77.

CONTENTS.

SERMON V.

On Compaſſion.

JOB xix. 21.

Have Pity upon me, have Pity upon me, O ye my Friends, for the Hand of GOD *hath touched me.* Page 101.

SERMON VI.

On Submiſſion to Divine Providence.

MATTHEW vi. 10.

Thy Will be done in Earth, as it is in Heaven. Page 125.

SERMON VII.

The Danger of chooſing vicious Companions.

I CORINTHIANS xv. 33.

Be not deceived; evil Communications corrupt good Manners. Page 151.

SERMON VIII.

The Duty of the Rich.

PHILPPIANS iv. 12.

I know how to abound. Page 175.

CONTENTS.

SERMON IX.

On the Temper of CHRIST.

PHILIPPIANS ii. 5.

Let this Mind be in you which was alſo in CHRIST JESUS. Page 199.

SERMON X.

On the Imitation of GOD.

EPHESIANS v. 1.

Be ye therefore followers of GOD. Page 225.

SERMON XI. XII.

On Happineſs.

LUKE x. 41, 42.

And JESUS *anſwered and ſaid unto her*, Martha, Martha, *thou art careful and troubled about many Things; but One Thing is needful; and* Mary *hath choſen that good Part, which ſhall not be taken away from her.* Page 249, and 273.

SERMON I.

THE NOTICE OF THE WORLD A MOTIVE TO VIRTUE.

Quique sui memores alios fecere merendo.

SERMON I.

MATTHEW V. 14.

A city that is ſet on an hill cannot be hid.

THE love of reputation and eſteem is natural to the human mind. Every man, whoſe moral taſte is not totally corrupted, and who is not ſunk into the depths of wickedneſs, muſt feel its influence. And thoſe are, generally, moſt ſenſible of it, who have attained the greateſt perfection in a virtuous temper and character. It is ſo far

from being a diſhonour or diſadvantage to a man, to be ſtrongly affected by the approbation or cenſure of others, that it is almoſt an infallible mark of a good mind, and may be of important uſe in the conduct of life. If our deſire of obtaining the good opinion of thoſe around us, and our fear of expoſing ourſelves to ſhame and contempt, be ſo well regulated, as not to counteract the ſuperior motives of religion and virtue; they will greatly contribute to ſecure us from falling into diſhonourable and vicious courſes, and to animate us in the purſuit of diſtinguiſhed attainments in goodneſs.—And ſurely, in the preſent imperfect ſtate of human nature, and amidſt the great variety of temptations with which our virtue is ſurrounded, no conſideration, which is likely to have an happy influence on our diſpoſitions and manners, ought to be overlooked. While we principally attend to thoſe moſt important arguments in favour of a life of virtue, which

ariſe

mean and unworthy actions, in thoſe for whom they had conceived an high veneration; and will be afflicted by ſeeing thoſe, whom they love, expoſing themſelves to contempt and miſery, by a fooliſh and vicious conduct. Or if their reverence and affection for their parents ſhould, at any time, ſo far blind their eyes, as to lead them to miſtake their foibles and faults for excellencies and virtues, the conſequence may be ſtill more fatal. Their unexperienced and incautious feet may be betrayed into the paths of folly and vice; and diſgrace and ruin may come upon them before they are aware. And ſurely it muſt be a powerful reſtraint upon every one, who is acquainted with the tender feelings of parental affection, to reflect, that by indulging his vicious inclinations he muſt unavoidably either loſe the eſteem and affection of his beloved offspring, or lead them into the dangerous mazes of wickedneſs.—On the other hand, if parents behave

behave with prudence, integrity and kindneſs in their domeſtic relations, and ſupport an honourable and virtuous character in the world; their children will always behold them with veneration and love, and ſpeak of them with reſpect and pleaſure;—they will take delight in manifeſting their filial affection by their dutiful behaviour;—they will contribute every thing in their power towards their ſupport and comfort, in the decline of life;—and they will account it their honour and happineſs to tread in their ſteps.—What more effectual inducement to a wiſe and virtuous conduct can a fond parent have, than the thought, that it will thus greatly contribute to the pleaſure and advantage of his offspring?

And as parents are obſerved by their children, ſo children are continually under the eye of their parents, who watch over them with the moſt anxious concern for their

their improvement and welfare.—It is ſcarcely poſſible for a child to commit a fault, which ſhall not reach the obſervation of his parents, and wound their hearts. If he early diſcover a fondneſs for licentious pleaſures, an obſtinacy and perverſeneſs of temper, a thoughtleſs and indolent diſpoſition, or a prevailing diſinclination to that which is good, he will "pierce them thro' with many ſorrows." They will obſerve the ſteps by which he hath deviated from the path of virtue, with ſilent grief—will lament the loſs of all their endeavours to train him up in the way in which he ſhould go, and the diſappointment of all their pleaſing hopes concerning him—and will, probably, "go down with ſorrow to the grave."—On the contrary, virtuous parents can enjoy no greater comfort than that of ſeeing their children walking in the truth. The firſt appearances of a pious and grateful—an humane and compaſſionate—a liberal and generous

diſ-

diſpoſition in their offspring, will afford them unſpeakable pleaſure. They will behold their progreſs in wiſdom and goodneſs, with conſtant attention and the higheſt delight. They will obſerve with growing ſatisfaction, their diligence in the cultivation of their underſtandings, their caution in guarding againſt the ſnares of vice, and their readineſs in embracing every opportunity of doing good. They will eſteem ſuch children their richeſt treaſure, and greateſt glory; and will delight to aſſiſt their progreſs in knowledge and virtue, and to afford them every poſſible advantage, for paſſing thro' the world with honour and comfort.—Now, what can be better adapted to preſerve young perſons from falling by the numerous temptations which ſurround them, than the conſideration that they cannot indulge themſelves in vicious practices, without filling the hearts of their parents, who have been their

moſt

moſt liberal benefactors and beſt friends, with inexpreſſible grief? What can be more properly urged upon them, to excite them to circumſpection and diligence, than the thought, that all their improvements will be obſerved by their parents, with heart-felt pleaſure? Let children then remember that "a wiſe ſon maketh a glad father, and that a fooliſh ſon is the heavineſs of his mother;" and let them frequently conſider their parents as ſaying unto them, "My ſon, if thine heart be wiſe, my heart ſhall rejoice, even mine."

In fine, in whatever relations we ſtand in domeſtic life, whether we be parents or children—huſbands or wives—maſters or ſervants, our behaviour will be conſtantly obſerved by the ſeveral members of our reſpective families, and will promote their pleaſure and happineſs, and encreaſe their eſteem and affection for us, or will fill

them with pain and diſguſt, and become the occaſion of innumerable evils.

Nor will our characters be obſerved in our families alone; — they are expoſed to the view of the world, like "a city ſet on an hill, which cannot be hid;" and we may be aſſured that there will always be perſons, who, either thro' kindneſs and friendſhip — thro' an idle curioſity — or thro' ill-nature and malice — will ſtand ſtill to obſerve them.

Thoſe whoſe hearts are united to our own in the bands of friendſhip, will take notice of our conduct, with a tender concern for our reputation and happineſs.—They will keep a ſtrict watch over us, that they may aſſiſt us by their advice, when we are in danger of erring, or reclaim us by their reproof, if we have gone aſtray. If they ſee us acting with wiſdom and honour, their

their love to us will be encreaſed, and they will themſelves be confirmed and eſtabliſhed in goodneſs by our example. But if they obſerve us purſuing a licentious and vicious courſe of life, they will be afflicted, in proportion to the degree of goodneſs of which they are themſelves poſſeſſed, and the ſtrength of their affection for us; —they will be aſhamed of their connection with us, and will think themſelves obliged, for their own honour and ſafety, to diſſolve it. Or, perhaps their attachment to us will diſpoſe them to view our faults in too favourable a light, and to "become partakers of our ſins." Now what generous man could allow himſelf in vicious practices, if he were duly ſenſible, that he muſt hereby, either give pain to his beſt friends, or do them an irreparable injury? Or, who that is not a ſtranger to the feelings of the friendly heart, will not embrace virtue with

double pleaſure when ſhe comes recommended by friendſhip?

The eyes of our enemies, likewiſe, are upon us. — If there be any who, thro' interfering intereſts, envy, ill-nature, miſunderſtanding, or any other means, are become our adverſaries, we may be certain that they will always keep a ſevere and cenſorious eye upon our conduct. If we happen to make one falſe ſtep, or even to approach towards the appearance of evil, we ſhall undoubtedly be obſerved and cenſured by them. They will triumph over us with malicious pride, and will proclaim and aggravate our faults before the world. They will do all in their power to encreaſe the number of our enemies, and will themſelves be more confirmed in their prejudices againſt us. But, if we behave with honour and generoſity towards all men, and with kindneſs towards thoſe who have injured us, they

they will probably, in time, become tired of their reſentments, will ſee and acknowledge our merit, and be reconciled unto us; or, at leaſt, we ſhall ſilence and ſhame them, "giving them no evil thing to ſay "of us;" and ſhall have a witneſs in our own breaſts, that they "hate us with-"out cauſe."

But farther, we are beheld and obſerved by the good and bad in general.——Good men, from their love of virtue, and their zeal for its intereſts in the world, will rejoice to ſee us ſupporting and recommending it by our own practice—will cordially embrace us as their brethren — and will point out our example to the imitation of others. We ſhall thus make all the good, who are "the excellent of the earth," our friends. Whereas, if we act inconſiſtently with our religious profeſſion, for our own ſakes, for the ſake of the public, and for

the honour of religion, they will continually behold us with concern and grief.—On the other hand, bad men will have their eyes upon us to take encouragement from our example, if they ſee us running into the ſame exceſſes and follies with themſelves. They will glory in us as their aſſociates, and will hereby become ſtill more confirmed and hardened in their evil ways.—But, if they ſee us reſolutely refuſing to "follow a multitude to do evil," and holding faſt our integrity, amidſt the moſt powerful temptations to give it up; they will be conſtrained publicly to acknowledge the ſuperior excellence of our characters, or, at leaſt, ſecretly to revere them; and it may be hoped, that they will be engaged, by beholding the "beauty of holineſs in us," to forſake the path of folly and wickedneſs, and to become wiſe, and good, and happy.

In

In theſe inſtances, every man is ſubject to the notice of his fellow-creatures. None are placed in ſtations ſo obſcure, as not to have a certain ſphere in which they act, and in which their actions are obſerved by thoſe around them. But the higher our rank in life is, and the more public the character in which we appear, the more are we expoſed to the obſervation of the world. An humble cottage, ſituated in an obſcure valley, will ſometimes attract the eye of the traveller; but a city ſet on an hill will be more frequently and generally obſerved. Thoſe who engage the notice of the multitude by the magnificence of their habitations, the elegance of their dreſs, and the ſplendour of their retinue, muſt expect that men will ſometimes turn their eyes from the luſtre which ſurrounds them, to obſerve their behaviour and manners. They will naturally look for ſomething as much ſuperior to the common level in the

the latter, as in the former. They will expect to find the great as much diſtinguiſhed by their virtues as by their ſtation, fortune, and appearance. If, upon a cloſer inſpection of their characters, inſtead of finding that honour, generoſity, and public ſpirit, which they had annexed to their idea of greatneſs, they ſee them capable of acting from the moſt mean and ſelfiſh principles, and of being unjuſt, oppreſſive and cruel; — they will ſoon learn to forget their borrowed ornaments, and to deſpiſe them in proportion to the degree of reſpect and homage, which they had before paid them. Tho' they may ſtill continue to obſerve the outward forms of deference and ſubmiſſion which cuſtom requires, they will look upon them as inferior to the meaneſt beggar that waits at their door, who hath preſerved his honour and integrity.

Thoſe,

Thoſe, likewiſe, who are employed in public offices are, in a peculiar ſenſe, like a "city ſet on an hill, which cannot be hid." Every man, in the civil or religious ſociety, over which a magiſtrate or miniſter preſides, thinks (and juſtly thinks) that he hath a demand upon him —conſiders him as the ſervant of the public—and obſerves the manner in which he performs the duties of his ſtation, and in which he acts in private life. It is reaſonably expected, that thoſe who are employed as inſtructors or rulers of others, ſhould not only be faithful and diligent in the diſcharge of their office, but peculiarly exemplary in their general behaviour. Nothing immoral — nothing contemptible — nothing ridiculous in ſuch perſons, can eſcape the public notice, or be obſerved without peculiar diſguſt. So prejudicial is "a little folly to him that is reputation for wiſdom and honour."

What

What hath been ſaid to illuſtrate the ſentiment of the text ſhould teach us (in the firſt place) openneſs and ſimplicity of behaviour.—How can any man expect to conceal himſelf under the maſk of hypocriſy, when ſo many eyes are upon him? He muſt be an adept indeed in the deceits of unrighteouſneſs, who can ſo artfully ſupport a fictitious character, as to deceive his friends and his enemies, and even thoſe of his own houſe. Amidſt ſuch a multitude of ſpectators, it is manifeſt that the moſt accompliſhed deceiver muſt be in continual danger of detection. It is therefore ſurely the wiſer and ſafer courſe, to lay "aſide all guile and hypocriſy and renounce the hidden things of diſhoneſty;" and to maintain that uprightneſs of intention, and ſimplicity of manners, which will give us confidence in the ſight of all men.

The

The doctrine of our text, "that we are continually expoſed to the notice of the world," may, likewiſe, teach us caution and circumſpection.—It is of great importance, for our own ſake, and for the ſake of others, that we ſhould take good heed unto our ways. If we be immoral, or greatly imprudent, in our conduct, it is impoſſible that we ſhould eſcape cenſure. We can ſcarely do a wrong action without expoſing ourſelves to the pain of being blamed and reproved by our friends, and condemned and reproached by our enemies. And every falſe ſtep which we take may be the occaſion of uneaſineſs to thoſe whom we moſt highly eſteem and love, or may be the means of leading them into dangerous and deſtructive paths. How important then is it that we ſhould "walk circumſpectly, not as fools, but as wiſe!"

The

The conſideration that we are continually obſerved by our fellow-creatures ſhould likewiſe excite us to make the higheſt poſſible attainments in virtue. The more amiable and exemplary our characters are, the greater pleaſure ſhall we give to our virtuous relatives and friends, and the more beneficial will our example be to the world. Let us then always conſider ourſelves as placed on high before the view of mankind: and let us be ambitious, to preſerve ſuch purity of character, that the malicious eye of our enemies may be able to diſcover nothing to our diſadvantage, and to acquire ſuch perfection in goodneſs, that the moſt ſanguine expectations of our friends concerning us may not be diſappointed. Let us be careful, that our "light may ſo ſhine before men, that they, ſeeing our good works, may glorify our Father who is in heaven."

And,

And, while we pay a due regard to the obſervation of our fellow-creatures, let us not forget that we are always under the eye of a Being, who ſearcheth all hearts, and underſtandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts, and whoſe approbation is of infinitely greater importance than that of all the world. Numerous as the ſpectators of our actions among our fellow creatures are, it is poſſible we may deceive them, for they "judge by the outward appearance;" but God cannot be deceived, for "he looketh at the heart." "There is no darkneſs, nor ſhadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themſelves from the Almighty." Let us, then, make his approbation the chief object of our ambition. In compariſon with this, let us learn to diſregard both the applauſes and cenſures of the world; and, to preſerve ourſelves humble under the one, and patient under the other,

let the language of our hearts always be—"It is a ſmall thing for me to be judged of man's judgment—he that judgeth me is the Lord."

SERMON

SERMON II.

ON DOMESTIC PEACE.

Felices ter, et amplius,
Quos irrupta tenet copula; nec malis
Divulsis quærimoniis,
Supremâ citiús ſolvet amor die.

HOR.

SERMON II.

GENESIS XLV. 24.

See that ye fall not out by the way.

THIS was the parting advice which *Joseph* gave to his brethren, after that affecting interview, in which he had been discovering to them — what long absence and the change in his appearance and condition had concealed — that he was their brother. He had been expressing his unalterable affection for them, by saying unto them, " Be not grieved nor angry with

with yourſelves that ye ſold me hither, for God did ſend me before you to preſerve life." He had juſt fallen upon his brother *Benjamin*'s neck, and been weeping over him. At the cloſe of this intereſting ſcene —while his heart was full of tenderneſs, and the tears of affection and joy were flowing from his eyes,—when he was ſending them away to his father with the news of his ſafety and proſperity, he knew not how to take his leave of them more properly, or to give them a ſtronger expreſſion of his concern for their welfare, than by exhorting them to cultivate mutual harmony and love. He was ſenſible that this unexpected interview with a brother, whom they had ſo unkindly and inhumanly treated, would probably furniſh them with no very pleaſing reflections, on their way home. He juſtly apprehended, that each of them, to exculpate himſelf as much as poſſible from an action of which they

they were all, by this time, heartily aſhamed, would be deſirous of laying the blame upon his brother; and that this might, perhaps, become the occaſion of hatred and contention. When therefore he parted from them, he thought the beſt advice which he could give them was, "See that ye fall not out by the way."

And the ſame caution may, with the utmoſt propriety, be addreſſed to all thoſe who ſtand in a family-relation to each other. It is their lot to purſue the journey of life together; and it depends, in a great meaſure, upon themſelves, whether it ſhall be agreeable and pleaſant, or uncomfortable and tireſome. An ungoverned violence, obſtinacy, or petulance of temper will beſet their path with innumerable thorns and briars; while a meek, contented and obliging diſpoſition will ſmooth their way, and ſpread perpetual ſunſhine around their ſteps.

ſteps. It therefore highly concerns them to pay a ſerious and conſtant regard to the advice of the text. More particularly,

The importance of domeſtic peace and harmony will appear, if we conſider how neceſſary it is to the regular and chearful diſcharge of the relative duties. — Frequent animoſities in families muſt by degrees weaken, if not entirely deſtroy, thoſe benevolent affections which are the foundation of all ſocial virtue. When the flame of love is daily ſuppreſſed by the damps of ill-nature and contention, what can be expected, but that it ſhould at laſt be totally extinguiſhed? Or if it ſhould ſtill ſurvive, with what pleaſure or ſatisfaction can the kind offices of domeſtic life be performed, in the midſt of daily diſſentions and endleſs ſtrife? How can thoſe, who are continually at variance with each other, heartily and chearfully unite in promoting

moting their common intereſts, and contribute their ſeveral parts towards their mutual ſupport and happineſs? What delight or improvement can ſuch families find in ſocial acts of religious worſhip? Or, with what propriety can thoſe who have ſpent the day in angry debates, or in hateful ſullenneſs, at the cloſe of it, bow down together before that Being who is the author of peace and lover of concord, and pray that they may be adorned with that "meek and quiet ſpirit, which is in the ſight of God of great price?" Can it be wondered at, if thoſe, who are ſo unhappy as to live in the midſt of the flames of contention, loſe by degrees their concern for the happineſs of their families, acquire an indolent and thoughtleſs turn of mind — abandon themſelves to the purſuit of unlawful pleaſures — and ſeek that peace and ſatisfaction abroad, which they find it impoſſible to enjoy at home? When a man

meets

meets with unprovoked reſentment, peeviſhneſs and ill-nature, where he hoped for the warmeſt returns of eſteem and love, he muſt either be totally void of ſenſibility, or be poſſeſſed of unuſual greatneſs of mind, not to ſink under, or caſt off, his burden.

On the other hand, domeſtic harmony confirms and increaſes mutual affection between the ſeveral members of a family, and hereby renders all the relative duties of life eaſy and pleaſant. Under the influence of this principle, each of them will chearfully exert himſelf, in his proper ſphere, for the advantage of the little ſociety to which he belongs, and in which he enjoys the moſt ſubſtantial comfort and ſatisfaction. He will apply himſelf with diligence and alacrity to the buſineſs of his ſtation, animated by the proſpect of participating the fruits of his labour with thoſe for whom he entertains the higheſt affec-

affection. The hope of being eſteemed, approved and applauded by his deareſt relatives and friends, will furniſh him with a continual and powerful motive to the practice of virtue. And he will readily perform the moſt difficult or laborious taſk in their ſervice, ſupported by a ſincere and tender concern for their welfare, and aſſured that he ſhall obtain —the only reward which he deſires—their gratitude and love. What will not a good man chearfully undertake, to ſerve thoſe with whom he hath long lived in peace and comfort, and with whom he hath enjoyed a ſeries of the moſt ſatisfying pleaſures which human life can afford?

The preſervation of domeſtic peace is, moreover, of the utmoſt conſequence with regard to the younger branches of a family. When parents live in continual variance with each other, they will find themſelves little diſpoſed to pay a ſuitable regard to the education

education of their children. Their attention will be diverted from this moſt important concern, by their frequent animoſities and trifling debates; and their minds will be too much unſettled and diſcompoſed, to perform it with any degree of pleaſure or ſucceſs. Or, if they ſhould attempt to cultivate the diſpoſitions and manners of their children, it is probable that a ſpirit of contradiction, or a tenacious adherence to their own opinions, will lead them to purſue different, and even contrary plans of education. The principles and maxims which one inculcates with all his might, the other will with equal zeal cenſure and condemn. Thoſe faults which one will excuſe and overlook, the other will think it neceſſary to puniſh. Thus authority will be oppoſed againſt authority, and influence againſt influence. The obvious conſequence of which will be, that they muſt loſe that filial reſpect and veneration which is the ground

of

of filial obedience. Or, at leaſt, their children will learn, to conſider one of their parents as ruling them with wiſdom and tenderneſs, and the other as treating them with unreaſonable ſeverity — to look upon the one as their friend, and the other as their enemy.—But, if this ſhould not be the caſe — if we ſuppoſe them to agree in the inſtruction and diſcipline of their offſpring; what will precept avail, where it is continually contradicted by example? How can they expect their children to love one another, and to cultivate the benevolent and friendly affections, while they themſelves are continually indulging the contrary paſſions, and living together in ſtrife and variance, enmity and hatred? The natural effect of ſuch examples muſt be, that their tempers will be ſoured, their moral taſte vitiated, and their manners corrupted.

Whereas, when thoſe who are at the head of a family are united in ſincere affection, and live together in conſtant harmony, their children have an amiable pattern perpetually before their eyes, which cannot fail of attracting their eſteem and love, and which will probably form them to a ſimilarity of diſpoſition and manners. And, where this union of hearts ſubſiſts between parents, it ſtrengthens their affection for their offſpring, and prompts them to unite their utmoſt endeavours for their improvement and welfare. They employ their joint ſkill and influence in the important work of education; and, in conſequence of this, their judgment is regarded with the higheſt deference — their advice is received with the greateſt reſpect — their authority is doubly revered — and they train up their children in the way in which they ſhould go, with eaſe and advantage.

Domeſtic

Domeſtic peace is, likewiſe, an object moſt worthy of our ſerious attention, becauſe it greatly contributes towards our improvement in virtue, and prepares us for appearing in the more public ſcenes of life. Every private family is a ſchool of virtue or vice. Our diſpoſitions and characters are not formed in public, but in the retired walks of domeſtic life. If we here accuſtom ourſelves to indulge a reſentful or peeviſh temper, we ſhall form an habit of anger or fretfulneſs, which we ſhall carry with us into the world. On the contrary, if we exerciſe forbearance, meekneſs, and benevolence, in our daily intercourſe with our relatives and friends, we ſhall eſtabliſh the moſt amiable affections in our hearts, —ſhall learn to look upon all mankind as our brethren—and ſhall be upright and honourable, kind and generous in all our tranſactions with them. In confirmation of this we may remark, that the inſtances of thoſe

who

who behave with affection and tenderneſs towards their relatives and dependents, and at the ſame time are unjuſt, unfaithful, or oppreſſive in their conduct towards others, are exceedingly rare: whereas, it is far from being unuſual for perſons who, in public, aſſume the appearance of civility and good-nature, to be, in their own families, peeviſh and moroſe. And hence it is, that when we ſee a man who behaves with propriety in domeſtic life, we immediately receive a bias in his favour, and are always diſpoſed to employ him in our ſervice, or make him our friend, much ſooner than one of a contrary character.

Farther to illuſtrate the ſubject under conſideration, we may obſerve, that domeſtic peace is of the utmoſt importance to ſecure unto us the pleaſures of domeſtic life. —If you would be convinced of this, viſit the dwelling of diſcord and ſtrife, and obſerve

obſerve the diſpoſition, and behaviour of its inhabitants. How doth every croſs accident diſcompoſe their minds, and overſpread their countenances with gloomy ſullenneſs, or furious reſentment! How doth the moſt trifling circumſtances totally incapacitate them for the enjoyment of life! In vain are their tables covered with plenty, their habitations adorned with elegance and taſte, and their perſons clad in the richeſt attire. Their angry paſſions, like the jaundiced eye, diſcolour every object around them. They are as incapable of reliſhing the moſt luxurious entertainment, or of enjoying the moſt delightful ſcene, as the man whoſe appetite is taken away, and whoſe imagination is bewildered, by a raging fever. So true is the obſervation of *Solomon*: "Better is a dinner of herbs, where love is, than a ſtalled ox, and hatred therewith."

Where-

Wherefore is it that we may ſo frequently obſerve thoſe, who appear to be poſſeſſed of every thing in their own families which can afford them ſatisfaction and comfort, continually roving abroad in ſearch of happineſs — paſſing from one ſcene of amuſement and diſſipation to another — and never ſo diſcontented and reſtleſs, as when they are obliged to paſs a ſolitary hour at home? It is becauſe their own ungoverned paſſions and fooliſh humours, or thoſe of the perſons with whom they are connected, will not permit them to enjoy the calm and heart-felt pleaſures of domeſtic life. For, to the man who is bleſt with tenderneſs and ſenſibility of heart, and who hath been ſo fortunate as to form agreeable connections in life, his own habitation will always be the moſt welcome place, and his domeſtic relations will furniſh the trueſt and moſt laſting pleaſures. Go to the humble cottage in which peace and

and love have fixed their abode, and "behold how good and how pleaſant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." Obſerve the unaffected chearfulneſs which ſmiles in their countenances; — hear in what artleſs language they expreſs the contentment and joy of their hearts; — ſee with what good-will they perform a thouſand offices of civility and kindneſs towards each other — with what ſatisfaction they ſit down together to their plain but wholeſome repaſt — with what unfeigned gratitude and joy they unite to preſent their thankſgivings to the Father of the families of the whole earth, and how chearfully and affectionately they commend themſelves and each other to the care and bleſſing of heaven. Dwell for a while in this happy family, and learn the ineſtimable value and excellence of domeſtic peace and love. —— Where hearts are thus united by the firmeſt and moſt pleaſing of all bonds, mutual affection,

affection, and where this affection is manifeſted in a conſtant ſeries of kind offices, there, indeed, is the ſeat of contentment and happineſs;—there will that ſolid ſatisfaction be found, which is in vain ſought for in the crouded and noiſy ſcenes of buſineſs and amuſement. The man, who can command the ſerene and ſilent pleaſures of domeſtic life, may leave to the ſons of ambition and vanity, to the ſlaves of intemperance and debauchery, and to the dupes of taſte and faſhion, their imaginary delights; and may ſay with the full conſent of his heart, "I have enough."

But, bright as this ſcene is, we muſt not expect to find it entirely free from clouds. Whatever degree of contentment and happineſs we may poſſeſs in our own minds, or in our domeſtic relations, we cannot hope to be without our ſhare of affliction from external cauſes. "Man is

born

born to trouble as the ſparks fly upwards;" and why ſhould we flatter ourſelves that we ſhall be exempted from the common lot of humanity? Our preſent tranquility and eaſe will moſt probably be interrupted by ſickneſs of body, by loſſes or diſappointments in our affairs, or by ſome other calamitous events. Or, however, it is appointed unto us all once to die; and, though we ſhould enjoy an uninterrupted courſe of domeſtic peace and happineſs to the end of our days, the painful moment of ſeparation muſt arrive, when we ſhall go down to the grave, and "the eye which hath ſeen us ſhall ſee us no more."

Now, under the afflictions of life, and in the immediate proſpect of death, judge ye, whether true ſatisfaction and comfort are to be found in the families where peace and love have been ſtrangers, or in thoſe in which they have taken up their conſtant

ſtant reſidence?—Thoſe who have lived together in a ſtate of variance and enmity have no inward conſciouſneſs of harmonious and well-regulated affections — no pleaſing recollection of a peaceful and happy life — no teſtimonies of the eſteem and love of their friends, to ſupport and comfort them in their laſt moments. But thoſe who have ſpent their days in the continual exerciſe of benevolent affections, and in the daily performance of reciprocal offices of kindneſs, may, at this ſeaſon, derive unſpeakable ſatisfaction from the remembrance of paſt life; may with compoſure and chearfulneſs reſign each other into the hands of that Being, who hath been the guide of their youth, and the ſupport of their age; and may poſſeſs a humble hope of meeting again in ſome happier ſtate, and of dwelling for ever in the regions of eternal peace and joy.

Such

Such are the arguments by which domeſtic peace and harmony may be recommended. It is neceſſary to the regular diſcharge of the relative duties; — it is of the utmoſt conſequence with regard to the education of children; — it greatly contributes to our improvement in virtue, and prepares us for the more public ſcenes of life; — and, finally, it is attended with the higheſt ſatisfaction and pleaſure. What advice then can be more worthy of the ſerious regard of all thoſe who are united in the relations of domeſtic life, than that of the text, "See that ye fall not out by the way?"

If you be deſirous of following this advice, and of enjoying all the pleaſures and advantages of domeſtic peace; — Be careful not to ſuffer your angry paſſions to be inflamed by inconſiderable and trifling incidents. It frequently happens, that circumſtances

cumſtances of the moſt trivial nature occaſion diſſenſions in families, and produce the moſt ſerious and fatal conſequences. To prevent this, always maintain an high ſenſe of the importance of family peace, and eſteem it as a precious jewel, in compariſon with which moſt other things are trifles. — Accuſtom yourſelves to ſubmit to the opinions and comply with the humours of others, in matters of little conſequence, even when they are contrary to your own inclination or judgment. A poſitive, tenacious, obſtinate temper hath its foundation in pride, ignorance, and ill nature, and is the occaſion of innumerable diſſentions. To preſerve you from it, imitate the conduct of *Abraham*, who, when a conteſt aroſe between his own ſervants and thoſe of Lot, ſaid unto him, "Let there be no ſtrife I pray thee between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen for we be brethren. Is not the whole

whole land before thee? Separate thyſelf, I pray thee, from me; if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right then I will go to the left."—To conclude;—Cultivate mutual affection and eſteem, by daily performing towards each other all the kind offices in your power. This is the moſt important and comprehenſive rule for the preſervation of domeſtic peace; for if you love one another ſincerely, you will be little diſpoſed to fall out by the way. The obſervation, which the apoſtle *Paul* makes concerning love in general, may be juſtly applied to that affection which ought to ſubſiſt between the members of the ſame family: "Love is the fulfilling of the law." "See then that ye love one another with pure hearts fervently:"

And may the God of love and peace be with you! Amen.

SERMON III.

AGAINST FRAUD.

Discite Justitiam moniti.

VIR.

SERMON III.

LEVITICUS XIX. 13.

Thou ſhalt not defraud thy neighbour.

IF the importance of ſubjects proper for public diſcourſe be determined by their connection with the duty and happineſs of mankind in general, the ſubject to which theſe words direct our thoughts will appear worthy of an attentive conſideration. There is no virtue, which men have more frequent occaſion to practiſe, or which is more immediately con-

conducive to the welfare of individuals, or of ſociety, than that which is enjoined in the text—equity, or honeſty, in our tranſactions with each other. Let us then, at this time, enquire into the nature and foundation of this virtue — point out ſome of the various ways in which men are in danger of violating the laws of juſtice, in the affairs of trade and commerce — and conſider the obligations which we are under to avoid every ſpecies of diſhoneſty and fraud in our dealings. "Thou ſhalt not defraud thy neighbour."

From the earlieſt ages of the world, men have formed themſelves into ſocieties for their mutual pleaſure and advantage. In this ſtate, they do not enjoy all the good things of life in common; but every man poſſeſſeth ſome ſhare of them, which is conſidered as his own perſonal property, In this ſtate, likewiſe, a great variety

variety of arts, manufactures, and employments have been invented, and are in continual uſe, for the benefit and convenience of the whole. From theſe circumſtances ariſe the relations which ſubſiſt between the buyer and the ſeller, the maſter and the ſervant.

Now it is with reference to theſe relations that the virtue of honeſty, in the uſual acceptation of the term, is principally to be exerciſed. An honeſt man, if he purchaſe any commodity from another, will make him that return, which cuſtom or their mutual agreement requires; — if he ſell any part of his property, he will ſeek no greater advantage from it, than will be generally allowed fair and honourable, or than he himſelf would be willing that the buyer ſhould gain, upon the ſuppoſition of an exchange of circumſtances;—if he engage another to ſerve him

him in any particular art or occupation, he will give him that reward for his ſervice which he hath a right to expect, from mutual agreement, general cuſtom, or the manifeſt reaſon of the thing;—if he undertake to ſerve another in his proper calling, he will perform the buſineſs he hath undertaken, with fidelity and punctuality, and will demand no more than a cuſtomary and reaſonable ſatisfaction for his labour;—in a word, an honeſt man, at all times, and upon all occaſions, doth unto others, as he would wiſh that others ſhould do unto him.

From this account of honeſty, we may eaſily infer wherein the violation of the great law of juſtice between man and man conſiſts, or when a man may be ſaid to defraud his neighbour.

The

The *purchaſer* is guilty of fraud, when he makes uſe of falſhood or low cunning to diminiſh the value of any commodity, in the eſtimation of its proprietor. This is the character which *Solomon* deſcribes in his book of Proverbs: "It is naught, it is naught, ſaith the buyer, but, when he is gone his way, he boaſteth." He likewiſe defrauds his neighbour, when he takes advantage of his ignorance, to obtain any thing for leſs than its real value; — when he receives any part of his property, and applies it to his own uſe, without being careful to make him the equitable return, at the time when he may reaſonably expect it; — and laſtly, when he makes that wiſe and merciful inſtitution of the legiſlature, which was only intended for the ſecurity of thoſe whom misfortune hath rendered incapable of anſwering the demands of equity, a protection for extravagance and knavery.

The

The *ſeller* defrauds his neighbour, when he takes advantage of the ignorance or miſtakes of the purchaſer, or makes uſe of arts to impoſe upon his judgment.

The *maſter*, or he who employs labourers under him for hire, acts a diſhoneſt part, when he lays upon them burdens too heavy to be borne; — when he requires harder or longer labour from them, than was at firſt agreed upon, without making them a proportionable acknowledgment;— or when he deprives them of their wages, or with-holds them beyond a reaſonable time. The law of *Moſes*, in this laſt particular, was equitable and merciful: "The wages of him that is hired ſhall not abide with thee until the morning:" that is, ſhall not be retained after the time when they become due.

The

The labourer or *ſervant* acts contrary to the rules of equity, and defrauds his neighbour, when, without good reaſon, he quits the buſineſs he hath undertaken, and leaves his maſter in difficulty; — when he performs his engagements in a negligent and defective manner; —or when he takes advantage of the confidence which his maſter hath placed in him, to imbezzle or injure his property.

Theſe are ſome of the myſteries of iniquity, which the ſons of unrighteouſneſs and fraud have invented, and too often practiſe, in the affairs of trade and commerce. —— You cannot live in the world, without being frequently obliged to obſerve ſuch inſtances as theſe. It is well if you have only *ſeen* them. Happy is the man who hath never fallen by the ſnares which the wicked are perpetually laying in the path of the juſt! But ſtill more happy

is

is he, who, in the midſt of a thouſand examples of fraud and injuſtice, and a thouſand temptations to follow the multitude who do evil, hath held faſt his integrity! When we meet with a man of this character, we may behold him with admiration and eſteem, and ſay concerning him, as JESUS ſaid of *Nathaniel*, "Behold an *Iſraelite* indeed, in whom there is no guile!"

Beſides the inſtances of diſhoneſty already enumerated, there are many others which might be mentioned; but without inſiſting upon theſe, I proceed to lay before you the principal arguments, to guard you againſt all the low arts of fraud and deceit, and to enforce the obſervance of the ſtricteſt honour and moſt perfect equity, in your dealings.

And,

And, in the firſt place, let it be conſidered, that the obſervance of the injunction of the text, "Thou ſhalt not defraud thy neighbour," is of the higheſt importance to the welfare of ſociety. —— If men were not generally governed by a principle of honour, one man would be afraid of entruſting his property in the hands of another;—jealouſies and ſuſpicions, contentions and quarrels would perpetually ariſe;—mutual confidence and credit would ceaſe;—and commerce itſelf would expire. What is it which gives life to trade, in all its branches, but that regard to honour and equity, which, numerous as the inſtances of injuſtice are, ſtill triumphs in the world, and encourages one man to commit his moſt valuable poſſeſſions to the care of another? Who doth not ſee, that honeſty is the only true cement of ſociety, and the chief ſupport of all commercial intercourſe? Who doth not lament the

unhappy effects which are produced, where this noble principle happens to fail? Where, in any ſingle inſtance, a man lurks in the ſecret places of unrighteouſneſs, and waſtes in luxury and extravagance that wealth, which the honeſt induſtry of others had gained, and which their unſuſpecting innocence had put into his hands; how often do we ſee one calamity after another ariſing from his unexpected fall! a flouriſhing family broken up! — relatives and friends involved in difficulties, and overwhelmed with grief!—many fair traders embarraſſed, perhaps ruined!—the mourning widow, and the deſolate and helpleſs orphan deprived of their little ſtore! Even in the preſent ſtate of things, ſuch ſcenes as theſe are alas! far from being unuſual. What then would be the conſequence, if injuſtice and knavery were daily to gain ground in the world, and at laſt to become univerſally prevalent? — ſurely nothing leſs than univerſal confuſion

ſion and wretchedneſs. On the contrary, were all unrighteouſneſs and deceit baniſhed from the earth, what a long train of evils would take their flight with them! what uninterrupted peace and harmony, what perfect ſatisfaction and happineſs would enſue!

But it may be obſerved, farther, that the virtue of honeſty is of eſſential importance to the happineſs of individuals.

The honeſt man is moſt ſecure from diſappointment in buſineſs, and has the faireſt proſpect of ſucceſs in his undertakings. Injuſtice and fraud may indeed in ſome inſtances, be the moſt expeditious, but they are far from being the moſt certain road to wealth and greatneſs. It often happens, that the artful and deſigning knave is diſcovered, and his ſchemes of iniquity are blaſted, before he hath accompliſhed his purpoſe.

purpoſe. After much care and labour, and many fears and anxieties, he may very poſſibly betray himſelf, and fruſtrate his own deſigns. —— But the honeſt man purſues the plain and beaten path of diligence, prudence and integrity, till he gradually obtains a competence, which he can behold with ſatisfaction, and enjoy with pleaſure.

Honeſty is likewiſe the beſt guard of our reputation. A man cannot take ſo effectual a method to become univerſally deſpiſed, as to do a baſe and diſhoneſt action: for, mankind, amidſt all their difference in opinions and cuſtoms, ſeem to be generally agreed in this — to encourage and reward integrity and honour, and to diſcountenance and puniſh injuſtice and fraud. Let two men be in every other reſpect equal; if the one have the character of an upright and good man,

and

and the other be deemed treacherous and fraudulent, it will be no difficult thing to determine, which will be generally eſpouſed, employed and aſſiſted, and which will be treated with neglect and contempt. Men may flatter themſelves, that they have learned the art of deceiving the world, and that they can execute their diſhonourable ſchemes, and, at the ſame time, ſupport all the reputation and enjoy all the advantages of the honeſt man. But the world is more quick-ſighted than ſuch perſons are aware: it requires more art and reſolution to ſupport a fictitious character, than ſuch perſons are willing to apprehend. Tho' their true features may long lie concealed under the maſk of generoſity or piety, a thouſand accidental circumſtances may occur to take off the diſguiſe. And how odious, how contemptible muſt they appear, to all who behold them in their natural colours! how

muſt even thoſe who, for the ſake of their families or friends, chooſe to conceal their faults, in their hearts deſpiſe them! And, when their characters are laid open to public view, with what ſhame and confuſion muſt they appear before the world without their wonted diſguiſe, and meet the faces of thoſe whom they have ſo long attempted to deceive! — On the other hand, how happy is the honeſt man, in the eſteem and love of all around him! He is frank, open and conſiſtent in his whole behaviour. His words agree with the ſentiments of his heart; and his actions correſpond with his profeſſions. He diſguiſes no low and ſiniſter views, under the ſpecious pretences of private friendſhip or public ſpirit. He makes uſe of no mean artifices, to accompliſh his deſigns. He lays no ſnares in the way of others, to betray them into difficulties. His wiſdom is always tempered with ſincerity,

cerity, and ſeaſoned with humanity, meekneſs and charity. If he cautiouſly avoids evils, and declines dangers himſelf, he never willingly brings them upon his neighbour. If he embraces favourable opportunities of ſerving his own intereſts, he is careful not to injure thoſe of others. He is never ſo ſelfiſh, as to be unjuſt or uncharitable to any man. He may, therefore, chearfully ſuffer even the eye of envy and malice to ſcrutinize his actions, and may ſubmit to have his moſt ſecret thoughts and purpoſes laid before the world: for the more accurately his conduct is examined, and the more thoroughly his deſigns are known, the greater applauſe will he receive. He can execute his ſchemes, and tranſact the buſineſs of his ſtation, without the painful apprehenſion of making any diſcovery to his diſadvantage. He always enjoys, and is ſenſible that he always deſerves the confidence of thoſe with whom

he

he is connected. He provides for himſelf a reſource againſt unforeſeen calamities, in the friendſhip and generoſity of thoſe whom he hath often faithfully ſerved. And if he ſhould meet with diſappointment, no one will dare, or be diſpoſed, to inſult his misfortunes. The wiſe will ſtill honour and reſpect his character; and the generous and compaſſionate will be ready to aſſiſt him. He ſhall not be aſhamed in the evil time; — his reputation ſhall ſhine forth, with a pleaſing luſtre, from under the cloud of adverſity.

The honeſt man, likewiſe, enjoys the continual happineſs of being ſatisfied from himſelf.—While the man who defrauds his neighbour muſt often ſuffer the reproaches of his own mind — while his unrighteous deeds muſt often riſe up, like horrid ſpectres, to torment his guilty ſpirit; the man of integrity, who hath, on all occaſions,

endeavoured

endeavoured to act an upright and honourable part, poſſeſſeth a perpetual fund of ſelf-enjoyment, of which no change in his external condition can deprive him. If he enjoys an abundance of the good things of life, he hath the happineſs to reflect, that it is the fruit of his honeſt induſtry, and the bleſſing of heaven; — he can ſay with the Pſalmiſt, "The Lord hath rewarded me according to my righteouſneſs, according to the cleanneſs of my hands hath he recompenſed me; for I have kept the way of the Lord, and have not wickedly departed from my God." Or if he meet with diſappointment and trouble, he hath this for his conſolation, that "they have not befallen him for any iniquity in his hands;" and can triumph, if not in the ſucceſs of his undertakings, in the integrity of his heart, and the innocence of his life. Having the teſtimony of a good conſcience, he can meet all the calamities

lamities of life with compoſure, and look forward with humble hope to the day, in which he muſt part with all his earthly poſſeſſions, and give an account of himſelf to God.

Let it be remembered, in the laſt place, that all injuſtice and fraud are highly diſpleaſing to the Almighty, and that uprightneſs and honour will always be acceptable in his ſight. We may be aſſured from the conſtitution of the world, in which equity and juſtice are of ſuch vaſt importance to the general welfare, and from the natural bias of the human mind towards integrity, that theſe are virtues which the great author of nature highly approves. And this ſentiment is frequently inculcated in the holy ſcriptures. —— "Lord, who ſhall abide in thy tabernacle, (ſaith the Pſalmiſt) who ſhall dwell in thine holy hill? He that walketh uprightly,

uprightly, and worketh righteouſneſs, and ſpeaketh the truth in his heart. He that doeth theſe things ſhall never be moved." It is the language of the prophet *Iſaiah:* "He that walketh righteouſly and ſpeaketh uprightly, he that deſpiſeth the gain of oppreſſions, and that ſhaketh his hands from holding of bribes, he ſhall dwell on high, his place of defence ſhall be the munitions of rocks; bread ſhall be given him; his waters ſhall be ſure." The prophet *Amos* addreſſed the *Iſraelites* in this manner: "Hear this, O ye that ſwallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail, ſaying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may ſell corn, and the ſabbath that we may ſet forth wheat? making the *ephah* ſmall, and the *ſhekel* large, and falſifying the balance by deceit; — the Lord hath ſworn, Surely I will never forget any of their works." The apoſtle *Paul* inſtructed his fellow-chriſtians,

chriſtians, "That this is the will of God — that no man go beyond, or defraud his brother in any matter." And Jeſus Chriſt, the great teacher ſent from God, hath left his diſciples this excellent ſummary of their duty on this head; "All things whatſoever ye would that men ſhould do unto you, do ye even ſo unto them."

We have then the greateſt poſſible inducements to lay aſide the hidden things of diſhoneſty, and to do juſtice and judgment every man with his neighbour. If we act in this manner, we ſhall contribute our part towards the removal of thoſe evils which injuſtice and fraud have brought into the world, and towards promoting the public tranquility and happineſs; — we ſhall take the moſt direct and certain road to ſucceſs and reputation in the world; — we ſhall poſſeſs that ſatisfaction in our own minds, which will be a per-

a perpetual ſource of comfort and joy; —we ſhall obtain the approbation of Almighty God, "who loveth righteouſneſs, and whoſe countenance beholdeth the upright";—and having faithfully "ſerved our generation, according to the will of God," we ſhall, finally, "be recompenſed at the reſurrection of the juſt:"

Which may God of his infinite mercy grant!

SERMON IV.

ON BIGOTRY.

Tros Rutulusve fuat, nullo discrimine habebo.

VIR.

SERMON IV.

JOHN IV. 9.

The Jews *have no dealings with the* Samaritans.

UPON the firſt reading of theſe words, one would imagine, that the *Samaritans* muſt have been a people of ſuch a vile and abandoned character, that their neighbours found it neceſſary, for their own ſafety, to avoid, as much as poſſible, every kind of connection with them — or, at leaſt, that they had been guilty of

ſome diſhonourable and iniquitous practices towards the *Jewiſh* nation, for which it was impoſſible they ſhould ever make ſufficient atonement. Had they violated ſome ſolemn league or covenant — Had they betrayed their neighbours and allies into the hands of ſome common foe — Had they made an unprovoked attack upon them, and attempted to bring *Judea* into ſubjection to *Samaria*; —— Such circumſtances as theſe might juſtly have been deemed a ſufficient ground for that eſtrangement and diſaffection which ſubſiſted between the two nations.

But the narration from whence the text is taken, and the *Jewiſh* hiſtory, give us a very different account of the matter — an account not much to the credit either of the *Jews* or the *Samaritans*. From thence we learn, that the inhabitants of *Judea* looked upon *Jeruſalem* as the only place in which public ſolemn worſhip was

to

to be paid to Almighty God; and that the *Samaritans*, (who were a mixed people, compoſed partly of the remnants of the *Jewiſh* tribes, and partly of proſelytes from other nations) on account of ſome antient tradition, fancied that the mountain *Gerizim* was, above all other places, holy unto the Lord. "Our fathers (ſaith the *Samaritan* woman to our Saviour) worſhipped in this mountain, and ye ſay, that in *Jeruſalem* is the place were men ought to worſhip." This ridiculous diſpute, with ſome other trifling differences concerning the ceremonial part of devotion, was the ſole cauſe of that incurable alienation and hatred to which the text refers. On this foundation, the enmity of the *Jews* againſt the *Samaritans* was raiſed to ſuch an height, that (according to one of their own hiſtorians) their chief prieſts and grand ſenate actually paſſed a decree, by which *Anathema* was pronounced upon the *Samaritans*,

maritans, and it was declared a moſt heinous crime, for a *Jew* to partake with them in their common repaſts or entertainments. Hence it was, that when our Saviour aſked a *Samaritan* woman for a draught of water, to refreſh himſelf on his journey, ſhe was aſtoniſhed at the requeſt, and ſaid, "How is it, that thou, being a *Jew*, aſkeſt drink of me, who am a woman of *Samaria?* for the *Jews* have no dealings with the *Samaritans*." Such were the conſequences of a difference in opinion concerning the place in which God ſhould be worſhipped.

Strange infatuation and ſtupidity! — that men ſhould ever imagine, that Almighty God, who filleth heaven and earth with his preſence, can be diſpleaſed with thoſe who worſhip him in ſpirit and truth, becauſe they neglect to preſent their devotions on one particular ſpot of ground! — that they could

could ever be ſo full of religious madneſs, as to break off all friendly and charitable connections with their neighbours, for no other reaſon, but becauſe they refuſed to go from their own country to another, to worſhip their maker! Yet ſuch were the opinions—ſuch was the conduct of a people, who valued themſelves upon their religious privileges, and boaſted that unto them were committed the oracles of God.

And the ſame bigotted attachment to particular ſchemes of faith and modes of worſhip, which manifeſted itſelf among the *Jewiſh* people, hath appeared, in numerous inſtances and various forms, through every age of the chriſtian church, to the preſent time. Many of the firſt chriſtians, who were converts from *Judaiſm*, retained ſuch a fondneſs for the ceremonial obſervances, to which they had been accuſtomed, that they could not, with the leaſt degree of patience,

patience, endure the conduct of thoſe who contended for a further extent of chriſtian liberty. Nay even *Peter*, who had conſtantly attended upon the wiſe and benevolent diſcourſes of his divine maſter — from whom, therefore, one might have expected more enlarged ſentiments, and a more liberal and generous behaviour—was ſo much under the influence of this prejudice, that when he came to *Cornelius*, a *Roman* centurion, " who was a devout man, and one that feared God, and gave much alms," he thought it neceſſary to excuſe himſelf for having departed from the cuſtom of his nation, by ſaying; " Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing, for a man that is a *Jew* to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath ſhewed me, that I ſhould not call any man common or unclean."— And in later ages, the ſame ſpirit of bigotry hath appeared in a thouſand different ſhapes of deformity.

deformity. Sometimes it hath led one ſect of chriſtians, in public council, to declare the opinions of another erroneous and heretical, and even to cut them off from the ſociety of the faithful, and pronounce them in danger of everlaſting damnation. The expreſs words of an ancient and well-known creed are; "Whoſoever will be ſaved, before all things it is neceſſary that he hold the catholic faith: Which faith, except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he ſhall periſh everlaſtingly." Nay, ſuch hath been the madneſs of blind zeal and bigotry, that many who have called themſelves the followers of the meek and benevolent Saviour of the world, not ſatisfied with ſentencing their fellow chriſtians to eternal miſery in a future life, have, at preſent, condemned them to ſuch dreadful ſufferings, as it is ſhocking to human nature barely to relate; — as if all men, who had too much underſtanding

underſtanding or conſcience to believe, or profeſs the ſame abſurd and pernicious opinions with themſelves, were monſters, which it was neceſſary for the ſafety of human ſociety to deſtroy.

And, though it may be hoped that the fury of this perſecuting ſpirit is in ſome meaſure abated, there are ſtill great multitudes in the chriſtian world, who ſeem to hold it neceſſary—or prudent at leaſt—that "the *Jews* ſhould have no dealings with the *Samaritans*." If a man, who profeſſes the ſame religion with themſelves, happens to differ from them merely in ſpeculative opinions, or external modes of worſhip, they will, as much as poſſible, ſhun all intercourſe with him. In converſation, they will be continually upon their guard, leſt they ſhould be corrupted by his diſcourſe, and will behave with ſuch an air of indifference and contempt, as

ſpeaks

ſpeaks in the moſt expreſſive manner the language of their hearts: "Stand by thyſelf, for I am holier than thou." If they have an opportunity of performing an act of kindneſs to him, they will either imitate the *Levite*, who, when he ſaw the wounded ſtranger lying in his way, paſſed by on the other ſide; or, at beſt, will beſtow their favours with that ſuperciliouſneſs and pride, which will deſtroy moſt of the merit, and all the grace of the action. And they will be peculiarly careful, as much as poſſible, to avoid all connections with perſons of heretical principles, in the affairs of religion. —— Such inſtances of bigotry, ſtrange as they may ſeem to many, are frequently to be met with among thoſe who profeſs a religion, the diſtinguiſhing characteriſtic of which is love. It cannot, therefore, be improper for us to guard againſt the moſt diſtant approaches towards uncharitableneſs, by re-

flecting — that it proceeds from miſtaken and pernicious principles — that it betrays a narrow and contracted ſpirit — that it hath been the occaſion of the greateſt evils — and that it is inconſiſtent with the profeſſion of chriſtianity.

Bigotry proceeds from miſtaken and pernicious principles. — Thoſe who are under its influence ſuppoſe, that Almighty God confines his favour to that particular ſect, to which they have the happineſs to belong. They imagine, that they are the only people whom God hath ſeen fit to enlighten with the knowledge of his truth, and that all around them are in moſt pitiable darkneſs and error. They look upon their little circle as a ſacred incloſure, on which the Almighty ſmiles with partial favour, and upon the reſt of the world, as a wild and barren wilderneſs, over-run with the weeds of ignorance and vice. No wonder, therefore,

therefore, that out of meer humanity, they exert themſelves to bring others into this happy fold. No wonder that the bigoted *Jews* in the time of our Saviour, and that bigots, in all ages and countries have compaſſed ſea and land to make one proſelyte. — But ſuch perſons are ſurely chargeable with the groſſeſt ſelf-flattery and deluſion. For, is not GOD the father of all the families of the earth? Have not all the inhabitants of the world, even the moſt rude and uncultivated, an equal right to hope for his protection and favour? And doth he not actually beſtow the gifts of nature, and diſtribute the bounties of his providence, at large and without limitation? Doth he not viſit every clime, and every creature with the light of the ſun? how then ſhould it have entered into the heart of man to ſuppoſe, that his favour is confined to any particular tribe or nation, or that he beſtows the neceſſary means of

virtue and happineſs only upon a ſmall and inconſiderable part of mankind? The Almighty is equally preſent in the wild and ſavage deſert, as in the moſt refined and civilized nations of the world. He is alike the father of all mankind. And nothing can be more abſurd and groundleſs — more vain and preſumptuous — than for a ſmall and inconſiderable body of men to expect to ingroſs the favour of heaven to themſelves, as if they alone were the remnant that ſhould be ſaved. The folly of the pretenſion is too obvious to need illuſtration. Yet on this weak foundation hath bigotry often been eſtabliſhed.

Another opinion, which hath given riſe to much uncharitableneſs and perſecution, is, that no man, who doth not, in the main, embrace the ſame faith with ourſelves, whatever ſhining moral qualities he may poſſeſs,

poſſeſs, ean reaſonably hope to be accepted of GOD. Men have indulged a vain imagination — that ſomething elſe, beſides an upright intention and a good life, is neceſſary to intitle a man to the character of a true chriſtian, and inſure him the enjoyment of that happineſs which the goſpel promiſeth — and that this, which is to give value to all his virtues, and, more than all, to recommend him to the favour of heaven, is a zealous profeſſion of particular ſyſtems of faith, and a ſtrict adherence to particular modes of worſhip. This abſurd and romantic notion hath been ſo deeply rooted in the minds of many, even in the chriſtian world, that they have not been able to treat perſons of a different religion or ſect with kindneſs or civility, and have ſhunned all intimate and friendly intercourſe with them, as a deviation from the ſtrictneſs and ſanctity, which their chriſtian profeſſion requires.

After what hath been ſaid, it is obvious to remark, that bigotry betrays a narrow and contracted ſpirit. If once men allow themſelves to enquire with freedom into the principles of religion, they will ſoon gain ſuch juſt and rational conceptions on this head, and be ſo fully convinced of the importance of virtue above every thing elſe; — they will become ſo ſenſible of the difficulties which attend every ſpeculative ſcheme and eſtabliſhed ſyſtem, and ſo well acquainted with their own ignorance and weakneſs, that they will have little inclination to cenſure and condemn others, for a difference in opinion. They will find themſelves incapable of treating their brethren with the leaſt degree of neglect or reſerve, merely on this account, while their temper and character appear, on the whole, deſerving of eſteem. When men have had an opportunity of forming an extenſive acquaintance with the world,

and

and have ſeen that there are, in all religious ſects, and among men of all profeſſions, perſons of worth and goodneſs, and perſons who would be a diſgrace to any ſociety; they ſoon learn to treat all ſpeculative controverſies, and party diſtinctions, with that indifference and contempt which they deſerve;—they will ſoon be convinced, that it is only real goodneſs of character which deſerves our chief regard, and that this is very far from being confined to any particular body of chriſtians, or of men. It is only thoſe, who have never thought enough to doubt of any thing, and thoſe who have never had an opportunity of leaving the little circle in which they were born and educated, who can be greatly under the influence of a ſpirit of bigotry and uncharitableneſs. And we may be certain, that our moderation and charity will always increaſe, in exact proportion with our progreſs in the knowledge of men and things.

Farther

Farther to manifeſt the odious nature of bigotry, let us take notice of its unhappy conſequences. The fatal effects of uncharitableneſs and perſecution in the chriſtian church, we have already ſeen. And to this we may add, that a bigoted temper renders a man unhappy in himſelf, and diſcontented with the world — incapable of feeling the refined and generous ſentiments of unbounded benevolence, and knowing the pleaſure of loving all mankind as his brethren. It makes him uneaſy in the ſociety of thoſe who, are perhaps much wiſer and better than himſelf. It cuts him off from innumerable ſources of enjoyment, of which that man is poſſeſſed, who loves every good man as his friend and brother, and who can with pleaſure tranſact buſineſs, exchange favours, or paſs a ſocial hour, with an honeſt and ſenſible man, without knowing, or wiſhing to know, to what church or ſect he belongs, or by what party

party name he is diſtinguiſhed.—This temper likewiſe creates the moſt unhappy diſſentions and animoſities in families. Tho' the religion of JESUS be calculated to promote peace and love, this evil ſpirit hath often occaſioned the accompliſhment of his prediction: "The father ſhall riſe up againſt the ſon, and the ſon againſt the father, and a man's foes ſhall be thoſe of his own houſe." A difference in religious opinions or practices hath frequently given riſe to contentions, between thoſe who might otherwiſe have enjoyed, without interruption, the bleſſings of domeſtic harmony and affection.

In the laſt place, a ſpirit of uncharitableneſs is totally inconſiſtent with the profeſſion of chriſtianity. — We have, in the ſtory from whence the text is taken, a ſtriking proof, that bigotry was not the temper of JESUS. He doubtleſs knew the difference

difference which ſubſiſted between the *Samaritans* and the *Jews*; but he knew too, that the GOD of heaven and earth is no local deity—that all places are equally under his eye—and that he always dwells in the heart of the good man, as his moſt ſacred temple, and receives his praiſes, wherever they are offered, as the moſt acceptable ſacrifice. He therefore took no part in the controverſy between the two nations; and when he wanted a ſupply of water to relieve his thirſt, he ſaw no reaſon why he ſhould not chearfully aſk, and thankfully accept it from the hand of a *Samaritan*. Nay, he did not ſcruple to converſe with this woman of *Samaria*, with the ſame freedom and condeſcenſion as if ſhe had been one of his own nation; inſomuch that when his diſciples, who had not yet caſt off their prejudices in favour of Judaiſm, came near, they marvelled that he talked with the woman, and

were

were ready to ſay unto him, "why talkeſt thou with her?" — And if we examine the doctrine and character of our Saviour, in general, or conſider the nature and deſign of his religion, we ſhall ſee that chriſtianity is directly oppoſed to all uncharitable and bigotted principles and behaviour, and is admirably adapted to diſſolve all diſtinctions of ſects and parties, and to unite all men in the bands of the moſt unconfined good will and generous affection. "There is neither *Jew* nor *Greek*, (ſaith the apoſtle *Paul*) there is neither bond nor free, for we are all one in CHRIST JESUS." The new commandment which CHRIST gave his followers, and on which he laid the principal ſtreſs, was—that they ſhould love one another. He makes this the badge, by which they were to be diſtinguiſhed from the reſt of the world. "By this ſhall all men know that ye are my diſciples, if ye have love towards

towards one another." Now, what temper can be more inconſiſtent with that benevolence which chriſtianity requires, than bigotry and uncharitableneſs?

Let us then diligently examine our own hearts, to diſcover whether any ſecret remains of this unchriſtian ſpirit be yet lurking within us, and whether it appears, in any inſtances, in our behaviour towards our brethren. And let us learn, from what hath been ſaid, to embrace all our fellow-chriſtians and fellow men in the arms of the moſt cordial and unlimited affection. Inſtead of treating thoſe, who are diſtinguiſhed from us by their religious opinions or cuſtoms, with neglect and contempt, or with coldneſs and reſerve, let us convince them by our generous, friendly, and affectionate behaviour, that though we differ from them in judgment, we are one with them in heart. Laying aſide all bigotted attachment

attachment to particular ſyſtems of faith, and modes of worſhip, which hath always been found to be a zeal without knowledge, let us direct the attention and ardour of our minds to more important and uſeful objects. Let it be our chief concern, and higheſt ambition, to promote the love and practice of univerſal righteouſneſs, both in ourſelves and among our brethen. For the ſame Apoſtle who hath exhorted us to "avoid foolliſh queſtions, becauſe they are unprofitable and vain," hath taught us, that "it is good to be zealouſly affected always in a good thing."

SERMON V.

ON COMPASSION.

Homines ad Deos nulla re propius accedunt, quam ſalutem hominibus dando.

CIC.

c.

for the Use of the Servant

SERMON V.

JOB XIX. 21.

Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends, for the hand of God hath touched me.

CAlamitous indeed was the condition of *Job*, who, under one of the heavieſt burdens with which any of the ſons of men were ever oppreſſed, was obliged thus to ſupplicate compaſſion, from thoſe who call-ed themſelves his friends. Afflictions like his were ſufficient, one would have ima-

gined, to have extorted a tear of pity from his moſt implacable foe. Deſpoiled of part of his ſubſtance by the ſons of violence and rapine — ſtripped of the reſt by the immediate hand of heaven — bereaved of all his children in one dreadful moment, and that at a ſeaſon when the ſight of their harmleſs feſtivity had elated his heart with unuſual joy — tormented in his own perſon by a moſt grievous, painful, and loathſome diſeaſe;——overwhelmed with all theſe calamities at once — at once caſt down from the ſummit of tranquility and proſperity, into the loweſt depths of poverty and diſtreſs; who could behold this complicated ſcene of wretchedneſs, without lamenting his unhappy fate? It would ſurely require none of the warm attachments and tender ſenſibilities of friendſhip, to awaken compaſſion in the heart, on ſuch an occaſion as this. With the common feelings of humanity, one would imagine

imagine it impoſſible to behold the afflictions of *Job*, and not to weep over them. Yet, to double the anguiſh which this good man was doomed to feel, even his own familiar friends, in whom he truſted, and from whom he had reaſon to expect the utmoſt tenderneſs and humanity, gathered themſelves together againſt him. They came unto him, indeed, with all the vain and uſeleſs parade of grief; when they drew near, they rent every one his mantle, and ſprinkled duſt upon their heads towards heaven; and they ſat with him in ſilence for the ſpace of ſeven days. But, when they opened their lips, inſtead of labouring to ſooth his ſorrows, and inſpire him with patience and fortitude — inſtead of pouring the balm of conſolation into his wounded ſpirit, they expreſſed the moſt unkind and unfriendly ſuſpicions concerning his integrity; — they upbraided him with having been guilty of ſome ſecret wickedneſs, which

which had brought theſe evils upon his head;—they heaped their reproaches upon him, and perſecuted him with cruel words. Though his calamities were ſufficient to melt the moſt flinty heart to compaſſion;—though he beſought their ſympathy, with all the eloquence which diſtreſs could inſpire;—tho' he ſaid unto them, "Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends, for the hand of GOD hath touched me;"—ſtill they turned a deaf ear to his entreaties, and, under the cloak of friendſhip, continued to wound him by the moſt ungenerous and inhuman treatment. Well might *Job* ſay unto ſuch friends, "Miſerable comforters are ye all."—With ſuch unfeeling hearts, may we, my brethren, never enter the habitation of wretchedneſs, or hear the voice of lamentation!

The world in which we live is ſo full of miſery, that, wherever we turn our eyes,

eyes, we are ſure to meet with objects which demand our compaſſion. Diſtreſs appears before us in a thouſand different forms; and in every ſhape ſhe ſupplicates our notice, with an importunity, which the humane and generous heart is unable to reſiſt. ——If we viſit the houſe of mourning, we ſhall there, perhaps, behold the weeping mother ſtanding near the corſe of her darling child, and, in all the agony of grief, lamenting that the dear object of her moſt anxious cares, her tendereſt affections, and her fondeſt hopes, is for ever torn from her arms, and refuſing to be comforted, becauſe it is no more: Or we ſhall ſee the faithful friend depreſſed and overwhelmed with grief, for the loſs of one who is dear unto him as his own ſoul, and expreſſing his undiſſembled and heart-felt ſorrow, by his penſive looks, his ſilence, and his tears. —— When we go into the dwelling of indigence and poverty,

verty, we naturally expect to find, that diſtreſs and wretchedneſs make a part of the family. And though, to the unſpeakable ſatisfaction of the benevolent mind, and to the honour of the great diſpoſer of all things, we ſhall probably meet with content and happineſs in the meaneſt cottages, much oftener than we might at firſt imagine; yet it muſt be owned—for many mournful proofs are, alas! continually before our eyes—that want and miſery are too nearly allied, and too commonly dwell under the ſame roof. We ſhall frequently ſee the honeſt and induſtrious poor burdened and fatigued with exceſſive labour—obliged to ſatisfy the cravings of nature with a coarſe and ſcanty meal—and perplexed with anxious cares and fears concerning the future day, ſaying, "What ſhall we eat? what ſhall we drink? and wherewithal ſhall we be cloathed?" And, as if the natural evils of poverty were not ſufficient,

we

we ſhall often find the rich and great adding to the load which nature hath laid upon their poorer brethren, the ſtill more grievous burdens of neglect, contempt, and oppreſſion.

But, of all others, the moſt affecting ſcene of calamity which we can behold, is, when a fellow-creature is at once oppreſſed with the difficulties of want, and tormented with the pains of bodily affliction. And yet, how commonly are theſe evils united in the ſame perſon! How often do we ſee thoſe, who have no other means of ſupporting themſelves and their families than by the daily labour of their hands, ſuddenly rendered incapable of purſuing their employments, by ſome calamitous accident, or confined to the bed of ſickneſs, by ſome painful and threatening diſeaſe! In this ſituation, the unhappy ſufferer is unable to provide for himſelf the ſupplies

which

which nature expects, and to procure that assistance and relief which his disorder requires. At a season when he stands most in need of plenty, to minister to his support and comfort, he is in the greatest danger of being oppressed and harrassed by want. — His whole family suffers with him; and that not only by sympathy, but by actual participation of his calamity. While his bodily pains are such as require the utmost exertion of his fortitude, he hath the additional affliction to see his dearest relatives involved in the greatest difficulties, through his misfortunes. While he is incapacitated for labour, their principal spring of support is dried up; — the foundation on which they have long rested fails them; — and at the same time that they are depressed with grief on his account, they are filled with painful apprehensions on their own. If any thing in the world requires — demands — constrains

our

our compaſſion, it is ſurely ſuch complicated diſtreſs as this. It ſpeaks to the heart of the generous and humane, this pathetic language, "Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends, for the hand of GOD hath touched me."

And every man ſhould conſider himſelf as immediately addreſſed in ſupplications like this; for every man is, or ought to be, a friend to the wretched. When we are in diſtreſs, we naturally conſider every one, who hath it in his power to afford us his aſſiſtance, as our friend and brother, and look up to him with a confident expectation that he will not refuſe to pity, or, if poſſible, to relieve us. And when we behold others in a condition which calls for our compaſſion, nature requires that we ſhould do as much for them, as we ourſelves ſhould expect, in like circumſtances — that is, as much as we are able.

Compaſſion is a debt which one human creature owes to another — a debt, which no diſtinction of ſect or party, no imperfection of character, no degree of ingratitude, unkindneſs, or cruelty will cancel. When we ſee that a fellow creature hath need of our aſſiſtance, to enquire to what country he belongs, what religious tenets he profeſſes, or what party name he wears, betrays the moſt contemptible bigotry and weakneſs; but to deny him our charitable aid, or to treat him with the leaſt degree of indifference or neglect, becauſe he happens to profeſs a religion, or belong to a ſociety different from our own, is unpardonable inhumanity. He who can withhold the tear of compaſſion, or delay the offices of charity, 'till he hath ſatisfied himſelf concerning ſuch trifles as theſe, hath a narrow contracted ſpirit — a cold unfeeling heart — which can never do honour to any religion or any ſect. The object who

ſolicits

ſolicits my notice may be a Mahometan, a Pagan, a Jew, or a wild Barbarian; but what have I to do with his religion, or his country? It is enough for me, that I am aſſured he deſerves my pity, and needs my aſſiſtance. He may have been a perſon of vile and abandoned character; he may even have greatly injured or offended me; but is he, on that account, the leſs my brother, or the leſs in need of my kindneſs? If I ſee him in diſtreſs, it is not now a time to call to mind his faults, or to upbraid him with his conduct: the more unworthy he is of my friendſhip — the greater affronts he hath offered me — the better opportunity I have of manifeſting my diſintereſted benevolence, and my forgiving temper.

Compaſſion is a plant which flouriſheth in the human heart, as in its native ſoil. The damps of ſuperſtition and bigotry may

blaſt

blaſt it; the weeds of pride and avarice may riſe up around it, and check its growth; but it is impoſſible that it ſhould be entirely eradicated or deſtroyed. — It ſeems implanted within us by our Maker for the moſt wiſe and benevolent purpoſes; — to expand our views and deſires beyond the narrow limits of our own private intereſts — to awaken in us a proper degree of attention to the welfare of others — and to afford us the moſt refined and god-like pleaſures. To "weep with them that weep," yields to the generous mind a gratification little inferior to that which it feels, when it "rejoices with them that rejoice." If there be a pain attending the ſenſations of compaſſion, it is a pain which is abundantly recompenſed, by the ſatisfaction and complacence with which it is attended—a pain from which the good man wiſhes not to be excuſed. He whoſe ſoul is formed of tenderneſs, and whoſe heart naturally and warmly

warmly intereſts itſelf in the concerns, and participates the afflictions, of others, experiences ſuch happineſs in the exerciſe of theſe affections, that he cannot help pitying and deſpiſing thoſe, who are entirely wrapt up in themſelves and their own affairs, and are ſtrangers to the pleaſing ſenſations of benevolence and compaſſion.

So great is the ſatisfaction which reſults from the ſentiments of humanity, that there is ſcarcely any conſideration which more fully vindicates the wiſdom and goodneſs of the Supreme Being, in permitting the numerous evils of human life, than this, That they afford us an opportunity of exerciſing the moſt amiable affections, and partaking of the nobleſt pleaſures. — Our condition is at all times in the hands of GOD, and all the circumſtances of our being are under his direction. And we are ſure that his hand, which is open to ſatisfy the deſire of every living thing, and

to crown us with loving kindneſs and tender mercies, can never be lifted up for our hurt. When it ſtrikes us with the rod of affliction, and we are ready to adopt the complaint of *Job* — "The hand of GOD hath touched me", we have ſtill reaſon to conclude that it is upon us for good. The pious mind can eaſily diſcern a great variety of benefits which the Almighty deſigns to convey unto us thro' the channel of adverſity: and it is far from being the leaſt of theſe, that, by this means, he trains us up in the exerciſe of the beſt affections of our nature, and leads us to the enjoyment of the moſt ſubſtantial pleaſures. To be compaſſionate is, therefore, to conform to the will of our Maker, and to anſwer one important end of our being.

The exerciſe of this diſpoſition is, likewiſe, neceſſary to gain the eſteem and love of our brethren, and to inſure unto us

compaſſion

their compaſſion and aſſiſtance in the day of trouble. — The ſame calamities which now excite our pity towards others, may, for ought that we can tell, ſhortly become our own portion. So variable, uncertain and chequered is the condition of human nature, that no man can reaſonably hope for an entire exemption from trouble — that every man, however proſperous and happy he may be at preſent, ought to expect, ſome time or other, to meet with his ſhare of affliction, and, in his turn, to ſtand in need of compaſſion and comfort. But how can we expect to receive that kindneſs from others, which we have neglected to exerciſe ourſelves? or, if we have overlooked and deſpiſed the poor and afflicted, in the day of our proſperity, what ſecurity can we have, that we ourſelves ſhall not be overlooked and deſpiſed, in the time of adverſity? Such is the natural conſequence of a ſelfiſh unfeeling diſpoſition—ſuch the puniſhment which inhuma-

nity

nity often brings upon itſelf in this world.—Whereas, the humane and compaſſionate are continually laying up a ſtore of eſteem and gratitude in the hearts of others, from which they may hope to derive relief and comfort, if affliction and poverty ſhould come upon them. "He that deviſeth liberal things, by liberal things ſhall he ſtand." The advice of *Solomon*, on this head, may therefore be conſidered as an excellent leſſon of prudence; "Caſt thy bread upon the waters and thou ſhalt find it again after many days."

Finally, to ſhew compaſſion to ſuch as are in diſtreſs is the way to qualify ourſelves for the divine acceptance, at that great day, when "the ſecrets of all hearts ſhall be made manifeſt, and when GOD will render to every man according to his works." The holy ſcriptures teach us that "the merciful ſhall obtain mercy;" and that the final ſtate of men, will be, in a great meaſure

meaſure, determined by the diſpoſitions which they have diſcovered, in this reſpect, whilſt on earth. Thoſe who have fed the hungry, relieved the ſtranger, cloathed the naked, and viſited the ſick, are inſtructed by the goſpel of CHRIST to expect, that they ſhall hereafter "inherit the kingdom prepared for them, from the foundation of the world."

Compaſſion to ſuch as are in diſtreſs is, then, a duty which is enjoined upon us, by the frame and conſtitution of our nature, by the connections and obligations of ſocial life, and by the authority and command of GOD.

And let us always remember, that to be compaſſionate is not merely to feel and cheriſh the emotions of pity in our hearts, but to embrace every opportunity of expreſſing them by our actions. No man can really deſerve to be ſtiled humane, or can partake

partake of the pleaſures and rewards of humanity, who doth not exert his utmoſt abilities for the relief of ſuch as are in affliction. Where the heart melts in ſympathy towards the diſtreſſed, and the eye weeps with thoſe who weep, the hand will naturally be ready to every good work. A compaſſionate temper will, indeed, lead us to extend our good wiſhes and prayers much farther than our actual aſſiſtance can reach. The good man pities every unhappy creature which he beholds, and grieves if he but hears a tale of woe, even when it is impoſſible for him to render any ſervice to the object of his compaſſion. But pity will always incline us to employ our utmoſt efforts in redreſſing the calamities of our brethren, and to "do good unto all men as we have opportunity."

With reſpect to the proportion of his poſſeſſions which every man ſhould devote to the purpoſes of charity, no particular rules

rules can be preſcribed. It is evident, indeed, that acts of liberality ought not to interfere with the demands of juſtice. No man hath a right to laviſh away the property of another even upon the poor and needy. This would be to cloath injuſtice and diſhoneſty in the dreſs of beneficence and charity. Nor ought any man to apply ſo large a ſhare of his wealth to charitable uſes, as will injure his relatives and dependents, and deprive them of a comfortable ſupport, agreeable to their ſtation and rank in life. But when all reaſonable allowances are made for theſe things, a man who conducts his affairs with frugality and diſcretion, may always find ſomething to ſpare, for the relief of the poor and afflicted. And thoſe who know the inexpreſſible pleaſure of ſatisfying the hungry, cloathing the naked, and changing the dejected and ſorrowful countenance into joy and gladneſs, will chear-

fully

fully forego a part of that ſplendor and ſtate, which their fortunes might enable them to ſupport, and deny themſelves ſome of the leſſer gratifications of life, that they may enlarge their opportunity and capacity of doing good.

Benevolence itſelf ſhould, indeed, lead us to uſe great caution in our choice of objects on whom to exerciſe our liberality; that the ſmall portion of our ſubſtance, which we are able to devote to this excellent purpoſe, may be applied in the moſt uſeful manner. It is much to be lamented that, for want of proper precaution on this head, impudence and clamour ſhould ſometimes extort, from the hand of charity, that relief, which is due to ſilent diſtreſs and modeſt merit; and that thoſe alms ſhould ſometimes be waſted on the indolent and undeſerving, which might have been employed to alleviate real affliction,

to

to ſatisfy preſſing indigence, and to encourage honeſt induſtry. It was greatly to the honour of *Job*, that "the cauſe which he knew not he ſearched out."

If, therefore, you deſire to do all the good which your circumſtances will allow, ſeek out the modeſt and deſerving poor, who are incapacitated for labour by ſickneſs or age, or who have met with unexpected misfortunes and diſappointments in life. And, having found ſuch real objects of charity, diſtribute your alms among them, with that freedom, generoſity, and chearfulneſs of ſpirit, which will render you like unto the great Father of mankind, who "giveth unto all men liberally, and daily loadeth us with his benefits"; for "the Lord loveth a chearful giver."

SERMON VI.

ON SUBMISSION TO DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

Permittes ipſis expendere numinibus, quid
Conveniat nobis, rebuſque ſit utile noſtris.

JUV.

SERMON VI.

MATTHEW VI. 10.

Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

THIS is the natural language of genuine piety, and the moſt becoming addreſs which a creature can poſſibly preſent to its maker. It ſtrongly expreſſes that humility, which is the proper temper of dependent, ignorant, and feeble mortals, and that chearful reliance on the Supreme Being, for which his perfections and providence lay ſuch a ſure foundation. When

we make uſe of theſe words in our prayers, we declare our cordial ſubmiſſion to the appointments of the Almighty;—we acknowledge ourſelves ſatisfied and happy in the perſuaſion, that all his deſigns, with reſpect to ourſelves and the whole creation, will be completely accompliſhed; — we expreſs our full and hearty conſent, that the power, which preſides over the univerſe without controul, ſhould direct all the affairs of this world; and that he who "ruleth in the armies of heaven, ſhould likewiſe rule among the inhabitants of the earth;—we profeſs our earneſt deſire that all mankind may ſubmit to the will of GOD, with the ſame chearfulneſs and alacrity with ſuperior beings, and the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect. —— Now what ſentiments could we more properly admit into our devotions, than ſuch as theſe? Do they not naturally ariſe from an

an acquaintance with ourſelves, and with the great object of our worſhip?

We are, alas! very imperfect judges of our own intereſts. Viewing objects thro' the falſe medium of prejudice and paſſion, we learn to call evil good, and good evil. Thoſe things which glitter in our imagination, pleaſe our taſte, and gratify our humour, we impatiently covet; without conſidering whether they will be, on the whole, good for us. Whatever approacheth us in the formidable dreſs of pain and trouble, we inſtantly dread, and haſten to ſhun; without examining whether it may not be attended with profit and advantage. If our wiſhes and hopes be fruſtated, or if we be obliged to paſs thro' ſcenes of affliction and ſorrow, we are apt to fret and murmur, and to think our condition hard. Whereas, our own experience often convinceth us, that we have been

been miſtaken in our judgment concerning theſe things; and we afterwards ſee, and are obliged to confeſs, that it would have been for our diſadvantage, to have been indulged in the enjoyment of thoſe things which we moſt earneſtly deſired, or to have been exempted from thoſe trials which we moſt of all dreaded. It is therefore our unſpeakable felicity, that the condition of our being is not under our own direction. And that humility, which a juſt ſenſe of our own weakneſs and ignorance will always inſpire, muſt naturally preſerve us from leaning to our own underſtandings — lead us to rejoice that our concerns are in much better hands than our own—and diſpoſe us, while we faithfully perform the duties of life, chearfully to commit ourſelves to the care of a being of unerring wiſdom and perfect goodneſs.

Reſignation

Reſignation to the divine will likewiſe appears to be our wiſdom and duty, from conſidering the nature, perfections, and character of the Being, to whoſe diſpoſal we are required to ſubmit ourſelves, and all our intereſts. It is the almighty and wiſe creator and preſerver of all things, who is continually performing wonders of power and wiſdom before our eyes, in the ſupport and preſervation of ourſelves, and every creature around us — who guideth the ſtars in their courſes, and maintaineth the harmony and beauty of the whole material creation — who is equal to the formation and direction of the vaſt ſyſtem of the univerſe: — It is the gracious father of all, who hath called innumerable creatures into life, that they might partake of his bounty — who hath endowed them with various capacities for enjoyment — who is continually ſpreading a plentiful table before the ſeveral parts of his family, for their

their ſupport and entertainment — who "openeth his hand, and ſatisfieth the deſires of every living thing"—and who manifeſtly makes the happineſs of his creatures the end of all his diſpenſations:——This greateſt and beſt of all beings, is the object of our humble confidence; it is to him that we are to reſign ourſelves; and in his appointments we are, at all times, to acquieſce. —— If we ſurvey the magnificence and variety of his works, we cannot doubt whether he is able to make us happy. And if we obſerve how uniformly all his operations tend to the good of his creatures, we ſhall have as little reaſon to queſtion whether he is diſpoſed to do it. The proofs of a wiſe and gracious deſign, which are to be met with in the conſtitution of human nature, in the frame of every creature around us, and in the general order of providence, are innumerable. Even with regard to

thoſe

thoſe events, which, at firſt view, ſeem to deviate from the plan of goodneſs, we can clearly diſcover, upon more accurate examination, that many of them are ſo far from being defects, that they are beautiful and important parts of the general ſyſtem. — Having ſuch convincing proofs, that unerring wiſdom and perfect goodneſs preſide over the world, why then ſhould we be ſuch enemies to our own peace, as to entertain a doubt, whether whatever is, is right, or whether all things ſhall work together for good? Why ſhould we make thoſe events, the reaſon and tendency of which we cannot fully explain, an objection againſt a truth, of which we have ſuch clear and ſatisfying proofs? Rather, let us impute every difficulty of this kind to our own ignorance, and make ourſelves happy in the perſuaſion, that "the LORD is good to all, and that his tender mercies are over all his works." —— Let us

follow

follow this delightful truth into all its practical conſequences. Being firmly perſuaded, that all things are ordered by that wiſdom which cannot err, and by that goodneſs which is perfect and everlaſting, let us caſt all our care upon the Almighty, and let us, in all our devout addreſſes unto him, ſay, with unreſerved acquieſcence and chearful ſatisfaction, "Thy will be done." Let the ſentiments of our hearts, at all times, be ſuch as theſe:

"It is the ſupport and conſolation of "my ſoul, that "the LORD GOD omni-"potent reigneth;" for I am fully con-"vinced, from the general conſtitution of "the world, and from my own daily ex-"perience, that he is "the LORD GOD "merciful and gracious." The plan of "the divine government is, indeed, an "object infinitely too extenſive for my "narrow intellects to comprehend. It hath

"difficulties

" difficulties in it, which I cannot re-
" move — myſteries which it is not in
" my power to unfold. But, that an in-
" ſect ſhould not be able to comprehend
" the deſigns of a ſkilful architect, or
" follow the genius of a *Newton* into all
" the depths of philoſophy, cannot be
" thought ſurpriſing. Inſtead, therefore, of
" arrogantly pretending to explain the laws
" by which the GOD of nature acts; I
" will think myſelf happy in the viſible
" proofs which I have, that there is a
" ſupreme power in the univerſe, which
" directs all things for the beſt; and
" where the line of human underſtanding
" is too ſhort to fathom the depths of
" infinite wiſdom, I will learn patiently to
" ſubmit, and devoutly to adore. I look
" upon myſelf as a being comparatively
" of little conſequence in the creation;—
" but I will not imagine that I am ſo
" inconſiderable as to be beneath the no-

" tice of my maker, or, in the language
„ of deſpondency, ſay, " Shall any re-
" member *me* from above? I ſhall not
" be remembered among ſo many peo-
" ple; for what is my ſoul among ſuch
" an infinite number of creatures?" He
" who hath determined the bounds of my
" habitation, and all the circumſtances of
" my being, will, doubtleſs, grant me
" that portion of happineſs which will,
" on the whole, be right. In his appoint-
" ments, therefore, I chearfully acquieſce.
" Inſtead of ſpending my days in uſeleſs
" and ungrateful complainings, I will act
" the part which heaven hath aſſigned me,
" with alacrity; — I will patiently ſubmit
" to the inconveniencies which neceſſarily
" attend my condition, knowing even
" theſe to be appointed by him who a-
" lone is wiſe and good; — I will pru-
" dently make the moſt of the comforts
" and pleaſures which my ſtation affords

" me,

" me ; and, without lamenting what is paſt,
" or fearing what is to come, will enjoy
" the preſent hour, with a thankful and
" chearful heart. It ſhall be my conſtant
" care to be as virtuous, and as happy,
" as my circumſtances will permit; and,
" for the reſt, I will chearfully leave it to
" him, who is infinitely better able to
" judge what is right and good than my-
" ſelf; and will, at all times, ſay, with
" the full conſent of my heart, " The
" will of the LORD be done."

Every good man muſt be convinced of the propriety of theſe ſentiments, and will adopt this language as his own. But to ſupport theſe ſentiments under all the changes and troubles of life — to be able chearfully to adopt this language, when we are tormented with pain and ſickneſs — dejected by misfortunes and diſappointments — oppreſſed by the injuſtice and cruelty

of enemies — afflicted by the unkindneſs and treachery of falſe friends — mourning under the loſs of thoſe we love—or alarmed by the ſudden and unexpected approach of death; — this is a difficult — this is, indeed, a laborious taſk. Let us, however, examine whether it be not poſſible for us, by the aids of a rational, ſincere, and fervent piety, even in circumſtances like theſe, patiently and chearfully to acquieſce in the appointments of providence.

We once, perhaps, flattered ourſelves with the hope, that we ſhould acquire large poſſeſſions, and fill up ſome exalted ſtation in life; and are now awakened out of our dream of wealth and greatneſs, and find ourſelves obliged to ſit down contented in the humble ſphere, in which providence hath placed us. Our caſe is, it may be, ſtill more lamentable; we are reduced by misfortune

misfortune or injuſtice, to contracted and embarraſſed circumſtances, from which our birth and education had given us reaſon to hope that we ſhould have been exempted; and even our moderate and reaſonable expectations are fruſtrated. In the preſent uncertain and fluctuating ſtate of human affairs, diſappointments like theſe are far from being unuſual. —— But are not our fortune and condition appointed by the wiſe and merciful Father of all? Is it not the ſame hand which at firſt formed us, and hath continually "loaded us with beneſits," which now cuts off our fond wiſhes, and fixes our habitation in the vale of adverſity? We ſee, and acknowledge, that the divine conduct towards us, in other inſtances, hath proceeded from diſintereſted benevolence, and been guided by perfect wiſdom. Why then ſhould we entertain a ſuſpicion, whether the Almighty be influenced by the ſame benevo-

lence, and directed by the ſame wiſdom ſtill, even in thoſe appointments of his providence, which are leaſt ſuited to our preſent inclinations? Is he not as well able to diſcern our true intereſts, and as much diſpoſed to promote them, when he fruſtrates our deſires, as when he grants them the moſt unbounded indulgence? Ought we not then to conclude that, when, with regard to us, "his paths are in the deep, and his footſteps in the mighty waters," trackleſs and unſearchable, they are ſtill tending towards the ſame gracious ends — our perſonal improvement and happineſs, and the general good of the creation? — Beſides, if we view our condition with the eye of reaſon, unclouded by the miſts of ambition and avarice, cannot we ourſelves diſcover many advantages which may ariſe from diſappointment and poverty? May not the difficulties which we meet with in life, ſerve to render us more diligent and active in performing

performing the duties of our ſtation, and conſequently more uſeful in the world? May they not be of uſe to correct our falſe notions of human happineſs — to reſtrain our unreaſonable expectations from external poſſeſſions, and to lead us to ſeek for peace and ſatisfaction — where alone they can be found — in the cultivation of our minds — in uprightneſs of intention, goodneſs of heart, and purity of manners? Do they not tend to preſerve us from an undue attachment to the preſent world, and to turn our thoughts and deſires towards that being, with whom is the fountain of life, and towards that ſtate, in which the righteous ſhall be happy, without the fear of interruption, diſappointment, or period? Ought we not, then, to meet the viciſſitudes of life with equanimity and compoſure, and to ſubmit to the greateſt reverſe of fortune, with a chearful acquieſcence in the divine will, adopting the

language

language of the prophet *Habakkuk*; "Although the fig-tree ſhall not bloſſom, neither ſhall fruit be on the vine, tho' the field ſhall yield no meat, the flock ſhall be cut off from the fold, and there ſhall be no herd in the ſtall, yet will I rejoice in the LORD, and joy in the GOD of my ſalvation."

It is, perhaps, our misfortune to have ſuffered by the malice, diſhoneſty, or caprice of thoſe around us. —— The vices of men are by far the moſt fruitful ſource of their miſeries. And, if we have the wiſdom and virtue to preſerve our own minds untainted, we muſt not expect to paſs through a world, in which iniquity ſo much abounds, without ſometimes meeting with injurious treatment, from the corrupt paſſions and vicious practices of others. Deſigning men, who are void of every principle but that of ſelf-love, will often

often lie in wait to deceive and betray the innocent and unſuſpicious, and to build their own proſperity on the ruins of their neighbour's. The arrows of envy, malice and calumny are continually flying around us on every ſide; we muſt not then wonder, if they ſometimes meet us in our way, and give us a painful wound. Nay, ſuch is the fickleneſs of the human heart, that even our moſt intimate acquaintance, and deareſt friends, may prove our greateſt foes; and we may receive unkind and cruel treatment — from the quarter where we leaſt expected, and are leaſt prepared to meet it — from the hands of thoſe we love. We may poſſibly have occaſion to adopt the bitter lamentation of *David*; — "Mine own familiar friend, in whom I truſted, who did eat of my bread, hath lift up his heel againſt me."—But even thoſe perverſe and malignant paſſions, which render men the moſt unhappy in themſelves,

themſelves, and the greateſt enemies to others, are, for wiſe ends, permitted in that conſtitution, which is under the conduct of the greateſt and beſt of all beings. He ſuffers the vicious, for a while, to proſper in the world, and even to inſult and afflict the righteous, that he may from hence educe the moſt perfect virtue, and conſummate felicity. Even at preſent, he over-rules the follies and vices of men to the general good; hereby, teaching the wicked, from their own experience — the moſt convincing of all inſtructors — that virtue is the only path to happineſs, and giving the good a fuller conviction of the advantages, and a higher reliſh for the pleaſures, of goodneſs. And we are taught to hope, that the Almighty will hereafter make a complete and everlaſting diſtinction between the righteous and the wicked; and that the preſent ſtate is only an introduction to another, from which vice

ſhall

ſhall be eternally excluded, and where virtue, peace, and joy, will for ever reign and triumph. Whatever we may at preſent ſuffer from the vices of men, we ought therefore to look, beyond the immediate cauſes of our calamities, to that being, who hath the hearts of all men in his hand, and to ſay, with unfeigned reſignation, "Thy will be done."

Another affliction, which we may be called to bear, and which to ſome minds is, perhaps, of all others, the moſt painful to be endured, is the loſs of dear and valuable friends by death. —— To attend the dying bed of a fellow creature, and to follow his remains to the ſilent habitations of the dead, is always a ſolemn and affecting ſcene. But, when our hearts have been long united to a friend, by all the endearments of mutual affection, and a continual interchange of kind offices;—

when

when we have been long accuſtomed to ſeek from him, counſel in difficulties, conſolation in trouble, and entertainment in the hour of chearfulneſs;—when our ſouls have been, as it were, bound up in the ſoul of our friend;—to behold him loſing for ever all power to comfort, aſſiſt, or delight us more—to ſee thoſe eyes, which had ſo long beheld us with the tendereſt affection, and thoſe lips, which had ſo often miniſtered conſolation and joy to our hearts, cloſed in death — to commit his lifeleſs remains to the grave, and there bid him a laſt farewell — is painful and hard indeed. No wonder that at ſuch a ſeaſon we are ready to complain, in the anguiſh of our ſouls; "LORD, why haſt thou made all men in vain? Wherefore was this treaſure put into our hands, to be ſo ſoon torn from us for ever?"——But, let not the tumult of our paſſions tempt us to arraign the ways of heaven, or render

us

us deaf to the ſober dictates of reaſon and religion.——We hold every other comfort of life, by the ſame uncertain tenure, by which we poſſeſs our friends. If therefore we think the ſpace allotted us for the enjoyment of them too ſhort, we may with equal reaſon complain of the ſhortneſs of our preſent ſtate of being, and, becauſe we are not permitted to live always, caſt away life itſelf, with all its bleſſings, as not worthy of our acceptance. If any thing in our preſent condition deſerves our thanks, it is the happineſs which we enjoy in ſocial life. Now, though one friend be removed from us, there are others left behind, with whom we may enjoy a great if not an equal degree of this happineſs. And, beſides this, we are not left without hope of meeting them again, in another and happier ſtate, where they ſhall be ſeparated from us no more. When, therefore, the time which infinite wiſdom hath appointed for their departure cometh, in-

ſtead of murmuring becauſe the courſe of nature is not changed on our account, and complaining that our friends do not live for ever, we ought to be thankful for the happineſs which we have enjoyed with them, and to ſay, with chearful ſubmiſſion to divine providence, "The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; bleſſed be the name of the LORD."

Let us, in the laſt place, ſuppoſe a good man oppreſſed with bodily pain and affliction, and in expectation of a ſpeedy diſſolution. While he is tormented with grievous anguiſh, or pining under ſome lingering diſeaſe; — when all the amuſements and pleaſures of life are paſſed by, never to be recalled; — while he ſtands upon the borders of the grave, and expects ſhortly to "go the way from whence he ſhall not return," and to enter upon a ſtate of being hitherto untried and unknown; — in this ſituation, religion

can

can do more to ſupport him, than all the ſkill of phyſicians, or all the affection of friends. It can ſooth his pains; — it can baniſh his fears; — it can transform the king of terrors into a meſſenger of peace; — it can inſpire his departing ſpirit with an hope full of immortality. Such is the mighty power of religion, that it can enable him, even at this ſeaſon, to ſay: —"The cup which my Father hath giv-"en me, ſhall I not drink it? What tho' "it be full of bitterneſs, it is mingled by "the ſame hand which hath ſo often mi-"niſtered to me the richeſt draughts of "pleaſure, and made my cup to run over "with bleſſings: I will not therefore en-"tertain a doubt, but that it is in faith-"fulneſs and mercy that I am afflicted. "I will ſubmit with chearfulneſs to my "preſent afflictions, from a full perſua-"ſion, that they are deſigned to exerciſe "and eſtabliſh my virtue, and to prepare "me for "a far more exceeding and eter-

" nal weight of glory." " Yea, tho' I walk " through the valley of the ſhadow of " death, I will fear no evil." Wherever I " go, I ſhall be under the care of my " Almighty Maker; whatever I am, I " ſhall be ſuch as his wiſdom and good- " neſs appoints. Hitherto he hath been " my father and my friend. Why then " ſhould I fear that he will forſake me in " the time of my greateſt need? — Into " thy hands, O God of mercy, I chear- " fully commend my ſpirit: behold thy " ſervant, do with me what ſeemeth thee " good; conduct me whitherſoever thou wilt; " beſtow upon me whatſoever thou pleaſ- " eſt; I will, at all times, acquieſce in " thine appointments, and confide in thy " goodneſs; and while I have any being " I will ſay, Thy will be done."

In life and in death, may theſe pious ſentiments be ours, and to this language may we all ſay, Amen!

SERMON

SERMON VII.

THE DANGER OF CHOOSING VICIOUS COMPANIONS.

Decipit Exemplar.

HOR.

Tell me with whom
you live and I will
tell you what you
are.

SERMON VII.

1 CORINTHIANS, XV. 33.

Be not deceived; evil communications corrupt good manners.

THIS is a caution which hath often been repeated in the ears of youth by their virtuous parents and friends, and which there is ſtill, alas! too much occaſion to renew. The young, the gay, and the inconſiderate, can never be too frequenly reminded of the hazard which they muſt run, if they chooſe perſons of vicious

vicious diſpoſitions, and corrupt manners, for their intimate aſſociates, and familiar friends. With a view, therefore, to guard them againſt this deſtructive ſnare, I ſhall, in this diſcourſe, endeavour to convince them, that it is ſcarcely poſſibly for a man to make choice of ſuch companions, without becoming a partaker of their vices, and of all the fatal conſequences which attend them; or, in the language of the text, that "evil communications corrupt good manners." The truth of this obſervation will be manifeſt — if we conſider the influence which a deſire of imitation, and a fear of offending naturally have upon the minds of youth — if we obſerve the ſtrength of vicious habits — or, in the laſt place, if we appeal to facts.

The propenſity to imitation, by which all mankind are in ſome degree governed, is more eſpecially concerned in forming the tempers

tempers and manners of young perſons. Their imperfect acquaintance with the nature of things and the cuſtoms of the world, and their diſpoſition to place confidence in all thoſe who have gained their affection, at once plainly prove, and fully account for the powerful influence of this principle upon their minds. They cannot, therefore, aſſociate with perſons of licentious characters, without being in continual danger of taking the infection of their vices.

And this danger is greatly increaſed, by a certain pliableneſs of temper, and fear of giving offence, which, amiable as it may in ſome views appear, is perhaps one of the moſt deſtructive ſnares to which youth are expoſed. We may appeal to their experience, whether they have not often done thoſe things, which they have in their hearts diſapproved, or neglected the

the performance of good actions to which they have been ſtrongly inclined, through fear of being ridiculed and reproached by their companions and friends —— whether a deſire of complying with the humours, and conforming to the manners of others hath not frequently betrayed them into practices directly contrary to the ſerious judgment, and even the preſent inclination, of their own minds.

There is, indeed, a timidity and cowardice in this conduct, which is highly deſerving of cenſure. For, why do we boaſt of our reaſonable nature, if, with all the weakneſs, though without the innocence of ſheep, we follow wherever the firſt leader points the way? Doth it become creatures capable of conſideration and reflection, to lay aſide their reaſon and conſcience in the conduct of life, and give themſelves up to be governed by the falſe taſte

taſte and caprice of others? — It may perhaps be ſaid, in excuſe for this ſpecies of folly, that we often ſee the rich and great — thoſe with whom we are connected, and on whom we have conſiderable dependence — and even our moſt intimate aſſociates and deareſt friends, on whoſe affection and eſteem we place the higheſt value, allowing themſelves in irregular and vicious practices; and that to reſiſt temptations like theſe requires uncommon reſolution and fortitude. And it is granted, that theſe are difficulties which frequently occur in life, and that the man who is inflexible to ill, and reſolutely good, may ſometimes offend thoſe whom he could wiſh to pleaſe. But ſuppoſe the worſt imaginable conſequences — ſuppoſe that your vicious acquaintance will exclude you from their ſociety and friendſhip; can you not find others, whoſe wiſdom and goodneſs will render them much more ſafe, agreeable,

ble, and uſeful companions? And if, by reſolutely refuſing to follow them in their vicious exceſſes, you ſhould loſe any worldly advantage, will you not be amply recompenſed, by enjoying the peaceful reflections of your own minds, and the approbation of your wiſe and virtuous friends? —— It is, however, far from being certain, that this conduct will deprive you, either of the good opinion, or the friendly aſſiſtance, of thoſe who are the greateſt libertines in practice. If any man expects to gain their eſteem, by complying with their ſolicitations, he will find himſelf greatly deceived. For, when they have prevailed upon you to forſake the path of virtue, and paſs with them thro' all the ſcenes of intemperance and iniquity, they will triumph over their unhappy victim, boaſt of their conqueſt, and expoſe your weakneſs to the world. Whereas, if you ſteadfaſtly reſiſt their importunity,

and

and hold faſt your integrity, though you may ſuffer the deriſion of their tongues, you will be ſecure of the ſecret approbation of their hearts. And they will often be ſo honeſt to themſelves, and to the virtuous character, as to applaud and vindicate it, tho' at the ſame time they condemn their own.

This complying temper is then a culpable weakneſs; and the advice of the wiſe ſon of *Sirach*, with regard to it, deſerves our ſerious conſideration: "Be not aſhamed when it concerneth thy ſoul; for there is a ſhame which bringeth ſin, and there is a ſhame which is glory and grace. Accept no man's perſon againſt thy ſoul, and let not the reverence of any man cauſe thee to fall." This is however a weakneſs, to which young perſons are peculiarly ſubject, and which is one principal ground of the danger to

which they expoſe themſelves, when they venture to aſſociate with perſons of immoral and licentious characters. It is becauſe "the fear of man bringeth a ſnare," that we ſo frequently ſee the obſervation of the text verified: "Evil communications corrupt good manners."

This obſervation may be farther illuſtrated, by conſidering the power of evil habits. When men firſt venture among vicious companions, they generally determine to be upon their guard, and to follow them only ſo far as prudence and virtue will permit; and imagine that they ſhall be able to leave them, whenever they ſee occaſion. —— The groſſeſt and moſt fatal deluſion in the world! Where is the man who can ſay, that he hath choſen the licentious and prophane for his familiar aſſociates, and hath preſerved his good principles unſhaken—his morals untainted?

If

If a man cannot refrain from joining himſelf to their ſociety, how ſhould he have reſolution to abſtain from following their example? Or if he once ſuffers himſelf to be led aſtray by them, what probability is there, that he will be able to force his retreat through all the oppoſition of ridicule and contempt — to reſtrain his inflamed paſſions — to conquer his growing evil habits, and to return to the paths of honour and virtue? After having been long inured to vicious irregularities, is it likely that he ſhould be willing to ſubmit his actions to be governed by the rules of virtue?

Experience proves, that long habits of vice pervert the judgment, and vitiate the taſte; and that the human mind may poſſibly be ſo blinded by corrupt affections, as to call evil good, and good evil, and may become ſo enſlaved to vice, as (figu-

ratively ſpeaking) to be as incapable of reformation, as "the Ethiopian of changing his ſkin, or the Leopard his ſpots."

A man of the niceſt ſenſe of honour and virtue, who would ſhudder at the thought of being guilty of the vices which he ſees practiſed in the world, may gradually loſe the good impreſſions of education, and his moſt delicate moral feelings, and may ſink into the depths of wickedneſs. And there is nothing which is ſo likely to produce theſe unhappy effects as evil company. If by any means a man becomes, for a time, a companion of perſons of licentious principles and manners; eſpecially if they be of the ſame age and rank with himſelf — if they be free, generous and good-natured — if they be poſſeſſed of an eaſy and inſinuating addreſs, and appear influenced by friendſhip and reſpect —— what will be the conſequence? — he

— he will have frequent and powerful temptations to vice caſt in his way; — he will ſee it repreſented in a pleaſing light, and by degrees, begin to think favourably concerning it; — he will then, probably, be perſuaded to make ſome faint and irreſolute advances towards the path of folly; — with faultering, trembling, and half retracted ſteps, he will enter the forbidden way; — he will not be able, at firſt, to proceed, without a thouſand ſtruggles; — the inward reproaches of his mind will ſpread a thouſand virtuous bluſhes over his face; but by continuing to aſſociate with men of bad character, the beſt principles of his ſoul will gradually loſe their power; — he will daily become leſs ſenſible of the deformity and danger of vice; — 'till at length, by repeated acts of wickedneſs, his ſcruples will vaniſh — his fears will be diſſipated — his heart will be hardened — and he will proceed from one

vice to another, till he arrives at a dreadful preheminence in wickedneſs. Thus do evil communications moſt certainly and fatally corrupt good manners!

In the laſt place, the truth of this obſervation is evident from facts. Which of us cannot recollect inſtances, within the circle of our own acquaintance, of perſons who have been deluded — corrupted — ruined, by the choice of licentious and vicious companions? Perhaps ſome of us have ſeen thoſe, who were dear to us, in early life, on account of their modeſty, diligence, piety, ſincerity and friendſhip — with whom we hoped long to have enjoyed the pleaſures of a virtuous intimacy — who have been unexpectedly caught in this deſtructive ſnare. Perhaps, we have ſeen their native innocence changed into licentiouſneſs — their piety into profaneneſs — and their diligence into idle extravagance

gance; — they have treated our friendſhip with contempt and deriſion; — and we have been obliged, for our own ſafety and reputation, to forſake their ſociety. —How many diſtreſſed parents may be found, who are weeping over a diſobedient and profligate child, and, with grief, aſcribing his ruin to evil company! There was a time when his amiable diſpoſitions were the joy of their hearts, and when they looked forward, with a pleaſing hope, to the ſeaſon when he ſhould be the comfort of their advanced age. The conſtancy and pleaſure with which he then attended upon religious inſtitutions — the tenderneſs and compaſſion with which he beheld objects of diſtreſs, and the chearfulneſs with which he relieved them — the readineſs with which he performed every office of filial duty — the care and diligence with which he treaſured up uſeful ſtores of knowledge, and maxims of prudence — and

— and the generous openneſs, manly thoughtfulneſs, and innocent chearfulneſs which he diſcovered — then gave them inexpreſſible ſatisfaction, and filled them with the moſt flattering expectations. But he enters the world, unſuſpecting — incautious — confident. He mingles, before he is aware, with young perſons of licentious manners, and, without being apprehenſive of danger, follows wherever they lead him. "He goeth (as *Solomon* expreſſes it) like an ox to the ſlaughter, and as a bird haſteth to the ſnare, and knoweth not that it is for his life." By degrees, the pious and affectionate inſtructions and admonitions of his parents and friends are forgotten — the good impreſſions of his education are effaced — and he ſinks into a courſe of licentiouſneſs, and a ſtate of inſenſibility. His parents obſerve and lament his degeneracy, with unavailing and, perhaps, deſpiſed tears; they

ſee

ſee their unwearied labours loſt, their tender affection ſlighted, and their pleaſing hopes blaſted; — and they go down with ſorrow to the grave. Such are the fatal effects of evil company. —— Look abroad into the world — obſerve ſome whoſe conſtitutions are impaired by intemperance and debauchery; — others whoſe circumſtances are ſo embarraſſed, that they know not what courſe to take; — others who are obliged to ſubmit to the confinement of a priſon, as a puniſhment for their irregularities; —and others chained in dungeons, juſt ready to receive, from the hand of juſtice, the deſert of their crimes. Aſk all theſe, what was the firſt ſtep towards their preſent unhappy ſtate; it is probable that moſt of them will tell you—bad company.

What farther arguments do we need to evince the truth of the Apoſtle's obſervation, "Evil communications corrupt good manners?"

manners?" Or, how can I more properly addreſs you, in the concluſion of this diſcourſe, than in the words with which this obſervation is introduced; "Be not deceived."

Perhaps thoſe who wiſh to ſeduce you from the path of virtue, and to make you partners in their wickedneſs, may for a time aſſume the air of ſobriety and friendſhip. They may be careful, at firſt, not to ſhock your ſenſibility; and may, perhaps, diſcover, in your preſence, little more than that innocent chearfulneſs, to which you have been accuſtomed. They may profeſs the higheſt reſpect for you, and only deſire to ſhew their friendſhip, by conducting you to a few innocent pleaſures, from which the unneceſſary reſtraints of education have debarred you. But be not deceived; for (to allude to the figurative language of our Saviour) "tho' they come

to

to you in ſheep's cloathing, inwardly they are ravenous wolves." However fairly they may addreſs you — in whatever pleaſing diſguiſe they may appear — be aſſured their deſign is to rob you of your character, your innocence, and your peace. "If ſinners, then, entice you, conſent not: walk not in the way with them; refrain your feet from their paths; neither deſire to be with them, leſt ye learn their ways, and get a ſnare to your ſouls. Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men; avoid it, paſs not by it, turn from it and paſs away."

Be not deceived by the vain imagination, that you ſhall be able to aſſociate with ſuch perſons, and ſtill retain your integrity. This is an imagination, by which thouſands have been lulled into ſecurity, and betrayed into vice and ruin. Truſt not your virtue, I beſeech you, on ſo precarious

carious a foundation. If the innocent man, with all the advantages of a religious education and good habits, finds it difficult to reſiſt the numerous and powerful temptations, which neceſſarily ſurround him; think what muſt be the condition of him who, not content with the trials of his virtue, which unavoidably fall in his way, placeth himſelf in the midſt of new difficulties, and, with the higheſt preſumption, meets temptations which he might eaſily have avoided. "Can a man take fire in his boſom and not be burnt?" Do you imagine it poſſible to be the conſtant companions of men of corrupt morals — to expoſe yourſelves to their artful inſinuations, the influence of their example, and the force of their wit and raillery; —with all the natural ardour of youth, to place yourſelves in the way of thoſe allurements, by which thouſands have been undone — and ſtill to retain your purity

and

and innocence? — If integrity and virtue were things of little conſequence, I would bid you, for once, try the experiment. But reputation and honour, uprightneſs and purity, a peaceful conſcience, and everlaſting happineſs, are too important to be trifled with: and there is little reaſon to renew an experiment, which thouſands have already made to their coſt. Let it then ſuffice, that you have ſeen the fatal effects of evil company in others. Preſume not to venture yourſelves in the way of that infection, by which ſuch multitudes have been deſtroyed. If you value the eſteem of the wiſe and good around you;—if you deſire to preſerve the affection, and not to deſtroy the peace of your virtuous friends;—if you would not give up every valuable intereſt, both in this world, and that which is to come; — "have no fellowſhip with the unfruitful works of darkneſs," but ſay concerning all the workers of iniquity,

" O my ſoul, come not thou into their ſecret; unto their aſſembly, mine honour, be not thou united."

In the choice of your intimate companions and friends, exerciſe great caution and prudence. Let them be poſſeſſed of a good underſtanding and a love of knowledge; that you may always find inſtruction and improvement in their converſation. Let them be perſons of a thoughtful and conſiderate turn of mind; that they may be able to adviſe, admoniſh, and reprove you, as occaſion may require. Let them be endued with a natural generoſity of temper, and ſenſibility of heart; that their attachment to you may be ſincere, diſintereſted, and inviolable. And, above all, let their morals be uncorrupted, and their characters unblemiſhed; that their example, inſtead of betraying you into vice, may encourage and aſſiſt your progreſs in the path

path of virtue. Seek for perſons who are poſſeſſed of ſuch qualifications as theſe; and having found, tried, and approved them, make them the friends of your heart; delight in their converſation; place confidence in their integrity; and ſecure their affection by all the kind offices in your power: for, remember, "He that walketh with wiſe men ſhall be wiſe; but a companion of fools ſhall be deſtroyed."

SERMON VIII.

THE DUTY OF THE RICH.

—— *Deorum*
Muneribus ſapienter uti ——

HOR.

SERMON VIII.

PHILIPPIANS IV. 12.

I know how to abound.

HAPPY indeed was the Apoſtle, who could, with truth, make this declation concerning himſelf! —— For the honour of chriſtianity — for the ſake of mankind, it were to be wiſhed, that all who abound could adopt the ſame language. We ſhould not then ſee thoſe who profeſs to learn of him that was meek and lowly of heart, and to ſet their affections

on

on things above, looking down upon their poorer brethren with inſolence and diſdain, and boaſting themſelves in the abundance of their riches, as if they hoped to live for ever, and not ſee corruption: — We ſhould not then ſee the bounties of providence, which are given us for our pleaſure and advantage, waſted — abuſed — trampled under foot, by riot, intemperance, and debauchery: — We ſhould not then ſee hunger and diſtreſs waiting at the door of plenty, and, at laſt, ſent away without ſo much as partaking of the crumbs which fall from the table — honeſt induſtry groaning under the grievous burden of oppreſſion — and humble modeſt merit buried in obſcurity, without reward, without encouragement, without ſupport. Such ſcenes as theſe would no longer afflict our ſight, if the happy art, which chriſtianity teacheth, and which its great Apoſtle had learned, were univerſally ſtudied and practiſed — if

all

all whom heaven hath bleſſed with riches "knew how to abound."

There are, perhaps, few who have modeſty and humility enough to think themſelves unacquainted with this art, or to ſuſpect, that, if they were advanced to a more conſpicuous and affluent ſtation, they ſhould not be able to appear in it with dignity, and to diſcharge the duties of it with reputation and ſucceſs. We ſhall, I believe, ſeldom find a perſon who would not be willing to have his virtue put to this trial, or who would enter upon it with any great degree of diffidence.

It is, however, far from being ſo eaſy a matter as may generally be ſuppoſed, to preſerve our innocence amidſt the ſnares of proſperity, and to anſwer all the demands which honour, benevolence, virtue, and religion will have upon us, in an exalted

alted ſphere of life. Our Saviour hath given us a moſt ſtriking repreſentation of the difficulties which attend a ſtate of eaſe and abundance, and inſtructed us to exerciſe the utmoſt caution and diligence in ſuch circumſtances, by ſaying; "It is eaſier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven." — Thoſe therefore who, through the good providence of GOD, not only have a ſufficiency for the ſupport of life, but are able to command many of its conveniencies and elegancies, and who, according to their rank in life, whatever it may be, live in plenty (for all ſuch may properly be ſaid to abound) will ſuffer me to put them in remembrance of the manner in which they ought to behave, in the midſt of their abundance.

And,

And, in the firſt place, thoſe who "know how to abound," will not ſuffer the increaſe of their wealth to fill them with pride and ſelf-ſufficiency, "nor think of themſelves more highly than they ought to think." —— It is a mark of a little and weak mind, for a man to be elevated above meaſure on the advancement of his fortune; as if all real merit conſiſted in an abundance of gold and ſilver; or, as if ſucceſs in buſineſs were a certain proof of the peculiar approbation and favour of heaven. A wiſe man knows, and a good man feels — that, how much ſoever he may be careſſed, fawned upon, and flattered by his dependents — how greatly ſoever the ſplendor of dreſs, equipage, and external ſhew, may dazzle the eyes of the multitude, and render him the object of their admiration and applauſe—he hath no real merit, but that which is ſeated in his heart, and which would remain unimpaired

unimpaired, if he was ſtripped of all his pomp, and cloathed in rags; — that with the diſcerning few — in his own impartial reflections — and before the righteous judge of men, all the diſguiſes of wealth and greatneſs, are "leſs than nothing and vanity." He ſees, that with regard to the honours and treaſures of the world, "all things happen alike to all, and there is one event to the righteous and the wicked." If therefore "he is made rich, and the glory of his houſe is increaſed," he is not "vainly puffed up," imagining himſelf "to be ſomething, when he is nothing." He wears all the ornaments of his exalted ſtation with a modeſt and graceful eaſe, and crowns them all with the faireſt gem which can adorn even royalty itſelf — humility.

Further, Thoſe who "know how to abound," will not ſuffer their wealth to gain

gain too firm an hold upon their affections, or form too high expectations of happineſs from it. "When riches encreaſe they will not ſet their hearts upon them;" They will not ſay unto gold, "Thou art my hope," or unto fine gold, "Thou art my confidence." —— There is nothing of which we have more frequent and convincing proofs, than of the inſufficiency of riches to make us happy. We daily ſee that no worldly poſſeſſions can ſmooth the brow of care, give eaſe to a pained body, or heal a wounded ſpirit. — We often behold thoſe who have been moſt earneſt, and moſt ſucceſsful, in their purſuit after wealth, ſuddenly deprived of their dearly purchaſed, and highly valued ſtores. And we are certain, that however fortunate we may have been in gaining or preſerving riches, the day will ſoon arrive, when we muſt leave them all behind us. It is, therefore, a leſſon of wiſdom,

as well as of piety, " that thoſe who are rich in this world, ſhould not truſt in uncertain riches, but in the living GOD, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy."

Thoſe who " know how to abound," will, likewiſe, be careful to enjoy the bounties of providence with moderation and temperance. —— The Almighty hath not, indeed, ſet before us the feaſt of nature, like the fabled cup of *Tantalus*, to fill us with perpetual deſire, without giving us leave to taſte of it. He doth not make our table a ſnare to us, by putting the means of gratification into our hands, only to try our reſolution in refraining from the uſe of them. Our wiſe and merciful father is incapable of ſuch conduct; and far be it from his offspring to charge him thus fooliſhly! Whatever our maker hath given us we may — we ought to enjoy. To taſte all the pleaſures, which every

object

object, and every creature around us is capable of affording, is to conform to the will of him who beſtowed them all. — But let it be remembered, that it is our wiſdom and intereſt, and therefore our duty, not blindly to follow the impulſe of appetite and paſſion, but to employ our reaſon in directing us to ſuch a uſe of the good things of life, as ſhall render them, on the whole, moſt advantageous to us. An attention to this maxim will ſoon convince us, that all thoſe exceſſive animal indulgences, which tend to injure our health, impair our underſtandings, deſtroy our characters, or deprive us of an opportunity of uſing our poſſeſſions for the benefit of others, are fooliſh and criminal. And this is equally true with reſpect to thoſe exceſſes, which ariſe from pride, luxury, and ambition. That undiſtinguiſhing and blind reſpect, which mankind have been accuſtomed to pay to

external appearances, and that deſire of being thought of importance in the world, which is natural to the human heart, have often led weak minds to aim at things much above their reach. By endeavouring to make an appearance, which they have neither had fortune nor oeconomy to ſupport, they have frequently deprived themſelves of thoſe pleaſures which they might innocently and prudently have enjoyed, and plunged themſelves into inextricable difficulties. Thoſe who indulge this ridiculous and pernicious diſpoſition, are as far from having learned the art of abounding, as thoſe who abuſe the bounties of heaven, and waſte their ſubſtance in riot, drunkenneſs, and debauchery. —— But the man who knows how to abound will carefully avoid theſe errors, and will enjoy his abundance, in ſuch a manner as will tend to enliven his ſpirits, and fit him for the duties and pleaſures of ſocial

life

life — will leave him power and inclination to employ a proper portion of his ſubſtance in works of charity — and will diſpoſe him more heartily to give thanks to the author of all good for his mercies. And, by this means, he will at once extract from his poſſeſſions the pleaſures of ſenſible indulgence — of ſocial enjoyment — of benevolence — and of piety.

Let us, in the next place, conſider the duties of thoſe who abound, which reſpect the Supreme Being, "the father of mercies, and the giver of every good gift."

The ſentiment which ought, doubtleſs, to prevail above all others, in the hearts of thoſe who abound, is religious gratitude. The pooreſt and moſt wretched of the ſons of men are not without ſufficient ground for thankfulneſs. How reaſonable then is it, that thoſe who enjoy not only the neceſ-

ſary

ſary ſupports, but the conveniencies and gratifications of life, in a degree vaſtly ſuperior to thouſands of their fellow creatures, ſhould abound in love and gratitude to the author of all their enjoyments! The leaſt reflection muſt convince us, that we have nothing but what we have received—that if we are diſtinguiſhed from our brethren, it is GOD who hath made us to differ — and that ſuperior enjoyments call for higher degrees of thankfulneſs, and more joyful ſongs of praiſe. If therefore we conſider the peculiar motives to gratitude and devotion which ariſe from a ſtate of affluence, we ſhall naturally expect the moſt ſhining examples of piety, among thoſe who fill up the higher ſtations of life. And yet, alas! how numerous are the facts which contradict this expectation! How often do we ſee, that when men "have eaten and are full, and have built goodly houſes, and dwelt therein, they

they forget the GOD who made them, and lightly eſteem the rock of their ſalvation!" How frequently do thoſe, who have poured out their prayers to the Almighty in the day of their diſtreſs, forſake him in the time of their proſperity! —— If we enquire into the reaſon why the tribute of religious gratitude, which is ſo indiſputably due, and which the pious mind finds it ſo natural and eaſy to pay, to the beſt of all beings, is ſo frequently with-held by thoſe from whom it might be firſt expected; we ſhall find that pride, preſumption, inconſideration, and the cares and pleaſures of life, all concur to produce this effect. The temptations to a diſregard of the Supreme Being, which attend a ſtate of proſperity, are, indeed, ſo numerous and powerful, that thoſe who have the reſolution and goodneſs to withſtand them, and, in this ſituation, to maintain a becoming ſenſe of the providence

and

and government of GOD, may juſtly be ſaid to "know how to abound."

Piety likewiſe requires, that thoſe who are in affluent circumſtances, ſhould conſider themſelves as entruſted by GOD with important talents, for which they muſt give an account, and ſhould act as faithful ſtewards of the manifold bounties of his providence. It is the wiſe appointment of heaven, that no man ſhould live to himſelf, but that all, in their reſpective ſtations, ſhould contribute their part towards the public good. Thoſe, therefore, to whom GOD hath given a large portion of the good things of life, ſhould conſider, that they are anſwerable to their Lord, for the truſt which he hath repoſed in them; and that they can have no reaſon to expect his approbation, if they appropriate the talents committed to them ſolely to their own uſe—if they neglect

lect to exert themſelves for the ſervice of their fellow-creatures, in proportion to the capacities and opportunities, which their ſuperior fortune and rank in life afford them. It is a maxim of equity, that to whom much is given, of them much ſhould be required.——But the particular improvement, which it may reaſonably be expected that thoſe who abound ſhould make of their truſt, will more fully appear, by conſidering their duty, as it reſpects their fellow-creatures.

Now, thoſe who know how to abound will undoubtedly avoid all haughty, injurious, and oppreſſive behaviour towards their inferiors. Pride and ignorance may ſometimes lead the rich and great to forget the common relation which ſubſiſts between man and man, as they have all one father, and to treat their poorer brethren with diſdain and contempt, as if they

they were beings of an inferior order. Nay their minds may be ſo totally vitiated and depraved — ſo entirely diveſted of every ſentiment of humanity and compaſſion — that they may become capable of increaſing thoſe burdens, which nature would have taught them to leſſen, and, as far as poſſible, to remove. But ſuch a temper and behaviour as this is an undoubted proof, either that a man hath riſen from a low ſtation of life to wealth and power, which he knows not how to uſe and enjoy, or that he is under the dominion of thoſe baſe and ſelfiſh paſſions, which are a diſgrace to the exalted rank in which he happens to be born. Thoſe who are poſſeſſed of true greatneſs of ſoul will conſider all mankind as by nature upon a level with themſelves, and will be ſenſible, that a poor man may have as much real goodneſs of heart and excellence of character, and may ſtand

as

as high in the eſteem of that being, who "judgeth not by outward appearance, but judgeth righteous judgment," as thoſe who make the greateſt figure in the world. They will be ſo far from inſulting and deſpiſing the poor and needy, that they will do all in their power to render their condition tolerable and eaſy, by treating them with mildneſs and gentleneſs, courteſy and kindneſs. They will not only carefully avoid all abuſes of their power, to the injury of their inferiors, but will take delight in employing their abundance, for the relief and aſſiſtance of the deſtitute and afflicted.

If we look no further than our own intereſt, and only enquire what is the moſt prudent and advantageous uſe of riches, we ſhall find that no man knows how to abound, but he who employs them for the benefit of his fellow-creatures.—For a proof

of

of this, we may appeal to the experience of the humane and compaſſionate. You, whoſe hearts and hands are always open to works of charity and kindneſs, and who employ frugality and prudence as handmaids to benevolence, ſay, — whether the pleaſure which you have felt, when you have ſent away the poor and needy from your door refreſhed and comforted— when you have ſought out the obſcure retreat of humble want, and ſilent affliction, and granted them a ſeaſonable and unſolicited relief — when you have tenderly pitied, and generouſly aſſiſted ſuch as had been involved in unavoidable difficulties — when you have contributed to the ſupport and encouragement of honeſt induſtry — or when you have eſpouſed and defended the cauſe of the injured and oppreſſed, or the fatherleſs and the widow; — ſay, whether the pleaſure which you have felt, in ſuch acts of liberality, hath not

not been infinitely ſuperior to all the gratifications of ambition and pride, of luxury and extravagance, of riot and intemperance? Hath not the performance of humane and generous actions filled your hearts with unſpeakable ſatisfaction and delight? —Nay, may we not ſtill farther appeal even to the man, who is governed by ſelfiſh and avaricious principles, and who is generally blind to the calamities and deaf to the intreaties of his fellow-creatures, whether, when compaſſion and charity have made a tranſient viſit to his heart, and prompted him to ſome uncommon act of generoſity, he hath not been better pleaſed with himſelf — and ſpent the day, which hath been thus diſtinguiſhed, more chearfully — than on any other occaſion whatſoever.

Suppoſe yourſelves ſtripped of all your preſent poſſeſſions, and reduced to a ſtate

of dependence, want, and miſery; what kind of reflections would you wiſh to be able to make, on ſuch a reverſe of fortune? Would they not be ſuch as theſe? "When the ear heard me then it bleſſed "me, and when the eye ſaw me, it gave "witneſs to me, becauſe I delivered the "poor that cried, and the fatherleſs, and "him that had none to help him. The "bleſſing of him that was ready to periſh "came upon me, and I cauſed the wi-"dow's heart to ſing for joy. I was "eyes to the blind, and feet was I to "the lame; I was a father to the poor, "and the cauſe which I knew not, I "ſearched out."—— Imagine yourſelves in the preſence of GOD, the judge of all, to receive the final reward of your actions: would you not, in theſe circumſtances, rejoice to reflect that you have been "rich in good works, ready to diſtribute, willing to communicate, laying up in ſtore for yourſelves

ſelves a good foundation againſt the time to come, that you might lay hold on eternal life?" Would you not eſteem it an unſpeakable happineſs, to have a ſeries of humane and benevolent actions, which you had performed towards your fellow-creatures on earth, brought to light and applauded by your judge, and to be admitted into the everlaſting habitations of good men, who "reſt from their labours, and whoſe works follow them?" — "If then thou haſt abundance, give alms accordingly; ſo ſhalt thou lay up a good treaſure for thyſelf againſt the day of neceſſity."

On the whole, the ſum of our duty, in a ſtate of proſperity and affluence, is this; To be humble, moderate and temperate — not to truſt in uncertain riches — to receive them with gratitude as the gifts of heaven, and improve them as talents com-

mitted to our care by the great Lord of all — to abſtain from pride, injuſtice, and oppreſſion, and to delight in doing all the kind offices in our power. — If we attentively obſerve and practiſe theſe rules, we may with propriety adopt the language of the Apoſtle; "I know how to abound." And when we ſhall hereafter be called to give an account of our truſt, we ſhall receive this delightful ſentence of approbation, "Well done good and faithful ſervants! enter ye into the joy of your Lord!"

That we may all be thus approved, may GOD of his infinite mercy grant!

SERMON IX.

ON THE TEMPER OF CHRIST.

Melius homines exemplis docentur.

PLIN.

SERMON IX.

PHILIPPIANS II. 5.

Let this mind be in you which was alſo in CHRIST JESUS.

THE real merit of every character is to be determined ſolely by the temper of the mind. The ſplendors of an exalted ſtation, and the gratifications and luxuries which wealth procures, may attract our admiration and excite our envy. Superiority and dominion may command the external marks of deference and ſubjection. Uncommon ſtrength of underſtanding

ing, or ſurprizing powers of genius, may entitle a man to our reſpect, and lead us to value him, as an agreeable companion and a uſeful member of ſociety. But it is only the genuine virtues of the heart, manifeſted by a courſe of laudable and worthy actions, which can engage our eſteem and love. The moſt liberal endowments of nature, the moſt complete accompliſhments of art, and the largeſt gifts of fortune, without a good heart, are nothing. Whereas, uprightneſs of intention, generoſity and benevolence of diſpoſition, and virtuous habits of mind, will give a man real worth, tho' every thing elſe be wanting. For, in the judgment of impartial reaſon, and in the ſight of Almighty God, the mind alone is the ſtandard of the man.

Meaſured by this ſtandard, how do ſome of the moſt renowned heroes of antiquity,

tiquity, whoſe names are immortalized in the records of glory, ſhrink away and diſappear! For, thoſe who could ſacrifice the happineſs of families, the peace and proſperity of ſtates, and even the lives of thouſands, at the ſhrine of ambition, whatever degree of valour or ſagacity they might boaſt, could ſurely have little pretenſions to goodneſs of heart. — Weighed in this balance, what multitudes of thoſe who have acquired the higheſt reputation for wiſdom and knowledge, will be found wanting! For facts have alas! too frequently proved, that amiable and virtuous diſpoſitions are not the certain and neceſſary offspring of an enlightened underſtanding.

There is, however, a character, which will bear to be examined by this teſt, and which will appear upon examination to have been poſſeſſed of the higheſt degrees of

of merit; — I mean, the character of JESUS CHRIST. From the hiſtory of his life and death it is manifeſt, that his heart was the ſeat of every amiable and worthy affection, and that, on this account, his example deſerves our utmoſt reſpect, and our conſtant and careful imitation. — Particularly, we learn from the chriſtian hiſtory,

In the firſt place, That the temper of CHRIST was *humble*.—This was the part of his character, which the Apoſtle *Paul* particularly recommended to the *Philippians* in the text: "Let this mind be in you which was alſo in CHRIST JESUS, — who, being found in faſhion as a man, humbled himſelf, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the croſs." — His humility was manifeſted in all the actions of his life, and ſpread a peculiar grace and beauty over every other virtue which adorned

dorned his character. He ſubmitted to all the inconveniences of a lowly condition, without caſting an envious eye upon the riches and honours which others poſſeſſed. He performed offices of kindneſs towards thoſe around him, without aſſuming that haughtineſs of behaviour, with which too many are apt to treat thoſe on whom they have conferred an obligation. Inſtead of taking pains to ſpread abroad the fame of his mighty deeds, he frequently charged thoſe, who had received the benefit of his healing power, to tell no man by what means they were made whole. Far from ſoliciting and courting popular applauſe, he always ſeemed to deſpiſe it; and when his wonderful works extorted the acclamations of the multitude, or the praiſes of his friends, he was always careful to remind them, that it was not he who did them, but his father that ſent him. When the two ſons of *Zebedee*, in the

the pride of their hearts, ſolicited for places of eminence in his kingdom, he rebuked their ambition, by ſaying unto them, "Ye know not what ye aſk." And when there was a ſtrife among his diſciples, which of them ſhould be accounted the greateſt, he ſharply reproved the proud and lordly ſpirit which they diſcovered, and taught them humility by referring them to his own example. "Whether is greater, he that ſitteth at meat, or he that ſerveth? Is not he that ſitteth at meat? But I am among you as he that ſerveth." And, to convince his diſciples, that there was no virtue which was higher in his eſtimation, or which he was more deſirous they ſhould cultivate, than humility — juſt before his crucifixion he performed the ſervile office of waſhing their feet, and cloſed this ſtriking leſſon of condeſcenſion, by ſaying, "I have given you an example, that ye ſhould do as I have

have done unto you." — Thus did the life of CHRIST manifeſt his humility, and ſpeak this language to his followers, "Learn of me, for I am lowly of heart."

Farther, The temper of CHRIST was *meek* and *peaceable*. —— The general tenor of his doctrine, and the whole courſe of his life, refuted the malicious accuſation, which was brought againſt him before *Pilate*, that he ſtirred up the people. He inculcated, in the ſtrongeſt terms, a peaceable and ſubmiſſive temper upon his diſciples. And, tho' he met with inſults, which many would think abundantly ſufficient to excuſe and even to warrant reſentment, he never deviated, in his conduct, from the doctrine which he taught. So far was he from encouraging a ſpirit of inſurrection and rebellion among the populace, that he taught his followers, that his kingdom was not of this world.

—When the *Samaritans* refuſed him entertainment, in one of their villages, becauſe he was a *Jew*, his diſciples, *James* and *John*, immediately reſented their conduct, and would have called down the vengeance of heaven upon them. But JESUS bore the affront with the greateſt calmneſs; and, inſtead of taking revenge upon his adverſaries, he thus reproved his friends for the vehemence of their reſentment; "Ye know not what manner of ſpirits ye are of."—When the officers came to him to make him priſoner, he neither made uſe of violent meaſures to deliver himſelf out of their hands, nor would ſuffer any of his diſciples to draw the ſword in his defence. One of them, from the abundance of his affection for his maſter, on this occaſion, ſtruck a ſervant of the high prieſt, and ſmote off his ear; but CHRIST, inſtead of commending his zeal,

rebuked

rebuked his raſhneſs, and ſaid unto him, "Put up again thy ſword into its place."

But our Saviour's meekneſs was moſt illuſtriouſly diſplayed, in the laſt ſcenes of his life. Before *Pilate* he was falſly accuſed by his enemies. His judge, who was not under the prejudices of the *Jewiſh* nation—from whom therefore he might have expected an impartial judgment — tho' he ſaw and confeſſed his innocence, had not the fortitude to eſpouſe his cauſe and grant him a releaſe, but gave him up a ſacrifice to the prejudiced and enraged multitude. Yet, in the midſt of all this unjuſt and cruel treatment, *Jeſus* maintained an abſolute command over himſelf, and held his peace. Nay, at the cloſe of his ſufferings, when his enemies treated him with ſcorn and contempt — cloathing him in a purple robe — placing a crown of thorns on his head — putting a reed in his

his hand, and hailing him King of the *Jews*; — when they added cruelty and barbarity to their inſolence — ſpitting upon him — giving him vinegar and gall to drink, and ſmiting him on the head;— in the midſt of all theſe inſults, he preſerved the compoſure of his mind, and ſuffered not an angry word to fall from his lips. "When he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he ſuffered he threatened not; but committed himſelf to him that judgeth righteouſly." "He was led as a lamb to the ſlaughter; and, as a ſheep before her ſhearers is dumb, ſo he opened not his mouth."

And as the temper of CHRIST was meek and gentle, ſo it was firm and *heroic*.—When, in obedience to the will of his Father, he aſſumed the important character of the Saviour of the world, he was well aſſured, from the nature of his undertaking

dertaking, that he muſt be expoſed to continual labour and fatigue, reproach and perſecution. He knew that he muſt be deſpiſed and contemned by the great, hated and oppoſed by the prieſts, and abuſed and inſulted by the populace. He foreſaw that bonds, impriſonment, and death, muſt await him. — Yet none of theſe things moved him, neither counted he his life dear unto him, that he might accompliſh his important and benevolent deſign. He frequently foretold his own death, without diſcovering the leaſt ſigns of timidity or cowardice. When he ſaw the malice of the prieſts, and the fury of the people, gathering like a thick cloud about him, and threatening his deſtruction, he ſtill continued to ſupport the character of a Teacher ſent from GOD. In the immediate proſpect of his laſt ſufferings, he converſed with his diſciples with the greateſt compoſure and chearfulneſs,

fulneſs, he ſpoke concerning his death as a pleaſing event, and commanded his friends to rejoice, becauſe he was going to the Father. And tho', juſt before the trying ſcene, nature recoiled at the proſpect of the agonies which awaited him, his fortitude and piety ſoon enabled him to ſay; "The cup which my Father hath given me, ſhall I not drink it?" — When he was actually betrayed by the artifice and treachery of *Judas*, with what calmneſs and ſerenity did he give himſelf up into the hands of his enemies! with what unſhaken firmneſs of mind did he appear before his judge! with what heroic fortitude did he receive his ſentence of condemnation, and proceed to the place of his execution! and when nature, wearied out with torture, at length ſunk under its burden, with what ſacred triumph did he ſay, "It is finiſhed," and give up the ghoſt! — To ſee the Saviour of the world

thus

thus ſtruggling with affliction, pain, and death, in their moſt dreadful forms, and, by the aids of conſcious innocence, benevolence and piety, riſing ſuperior to them all — how inſtructive, how animating the ſight! Who can behold it, without ſaying, "Worthy is the Lamb that was ſlain, to receive bleſſing, and honour, and glory, and power?"

But we may obſerve further, that the temper of CHRIST was *humane* and *generous*. — Benevolence was the ruling principle of his heart, and it was the chief buſineſs of his life to do good. He devoted himſelf entirely to the ſervice of mankind, and employed all the powers with which he was endued for their advantage. The afflictions and pains of body to which they are ſubject engaged a conſiderable ſhare of his attention, and he went about, healing all manner of ſickneſs, and

and all manner of diſeaſes among the people. He never beheld a brother in diſtreſs, without feeling his heart melt with pity towards him, and being diſpoſed to aſſiſt and relieve him. — But his benevolence was principally employed upon much higher and more important objects. To correct the miſtakes, and remove the prejudices, under which mankind had long laboured, with reſpect to the ſubjects of morality and religion — to give them juſt conceptions of Almighty GOD, and of the worſhip and obedience which he requires from his rational offspring —— to eſtabliſh pure and undefiled religion on the ruins of idolatry and ſuperſtition — to turn men from the error of their ways, and lead them to the practice of the moſt perfect virtue, by ſetting before them the ſolemnities of a final judgment, and teaching them to expect everlaſting deſtruction, or eternal life, in the world to come, according.

ing to the deeds done in the body — in a word, to enlighten the underſtandings — refine the ſentiments — reform the manners, and increaſe the happineſs of mankind, were the generous and godlike purpoſes which animated the heart of our benevolent Saviour. In the execution of theſe deſigns he always found his higheſt gratification and delight. "My meat (ſaith he) is to do the will of him that ſent me, and to finiſh his work."

Such was his love to mankind, that he was not diſmayed in the purſuit of their happineſs, by the greateſt hardſhips and difficulties — by the moſt undeſerved reproaches and inſults — nor even by the moſt ignominious death. He perſevered in his labours of love, in the midſt of the greateſt diſcouragements and moſt violent oppoſition; and, that he might complete his benevolent deſign, he voluntarily gave himſelf

himſelf up a ſacrifice to the blind reſentment and malice of his enemies. When theſe would no longer permit him to live in the ſervice of mankind, he chearfully ſubmitted to die for their ſakes. And ſurely "greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

And his affection was far from being limited to the *Jewiſh* nation; his temper was liberal and generous — his benevolence unconfined. When an opportunity offered itſelf for inſtructing a woman of *Samaria*, he did not excuſe himſelf by ſaying, "The *Jews* have no dealings with the *Samaritans*." The general tendency of his life and doctrine was to inculcate the principles of univerſal benevolence. And the ſervices which he performed to mankind were of ſuch a nature, that the good effects of them may be extended to the remoteſt

moteſt nations, and enjoyed by the moſt diſtant poſterity. He was, therefore, in the higheſt ſenſe, worthy of the title which is given him in Scripture — The Saviour of the world.

But tho' our Saviour's benevolence extended to the whole human race, there were ſome who were more immediately diſtinguiſhed by his perſonal notice and affection; and from his behaviour towards them we may infer, that his temper was *friendly*. — Out of the multitude who became his diſciples, he ſelected twelve for his more conſtant companions, and intimate friends. Theſe he employed to aſſiſt him in preaching the goſpel. With theſe he often converſed with the utmoſt freedom and confidence. When their conduct was, in any reſpect, worthy of blame, he rebuked them with fidelity and tenderneſs. And, having long experienced the ſincerity

ſincerity of their attachment to him, he took a particular and ſolemn farewel of them juſt before his death, in which he gave them the ſtrongeſt proofs of his affection. He addreſſed them by the endearing appellations of friends and children. He ſtrongly recommended to them mutual forbearance and love. He comforted them under the proſpect of loſing their guide, their maſter, and their friend, and being left as ſheep without a ſhepherd, in the midſt of their enemies, by aſſuring them, that he would come again, and receive them to himſelf, and by offering up the moſt benevolent interceſſions on their behalf to his heavenly Father. — In the midſt of all his ſufferings, his heart was full of affection for his diſciples. When he was betrayed into the hands of his enemies, he was much more concerned for the ſafety of his friends than for his own, and ſaid unto the officers, "If ye ſeek me, let

let theſe go their way." While he was himſelf unjuſtly accuſed and condemned in the court of *Pilate*, he was attentive to the conduct of *Peter*, and rebuked his ungenerous and cowardly denial of him, by a look which pierced him to the heart, and conſtrained him to go out and weep bitterly.—There cannot be a more affecting inſtance of filial affection, than the concern which CHRIST diſcovered for the ſafety of his mother, while he hung upon the croſs. "When JESUS ſaw his mother, and the diſciple ſtanding by whom he loved, he ſaid unto his mother, Woman, behold thy ſon; then ſaid he to the diſciple, Behold thy mother." What a pleaſing picture doth this tender and affectionate language, uttered at this critical ſeaſon, give us of the heart of JESUS!

To this we may add, that our Saviour exerciſed a *forgiving temper* towards his

enemies. —We have an inconteſtible proof of this in the manner in which he behaved towards his countrymen, notwithſtanding all the ungrateful treatment, and the unprovoked inſults, which he received from them. For, tho' "he was deſpiſed and rejected of men," he ſtill "went about doing good." But the moſt ſtriking inſtance of his forgiving temper we meet with in the laſt ſcene of his ſufferings. When his enemies loaded him with all the reproach and contempt which their malice could invent — when they increaſed the tortures of crucifixion by their wanton cruelty, and ſeemed to ſport with his misfortunes; inſtead of expreſſing that reſentment which ſuch inhumanity might juſtly have provoked, he manifeſted his hearty forgiveneſs of them, by praying that their ſin might not be laid to their charge, and pleading the only excuſe which could poſſibly be alledged in their behalf; "Father,

ther, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

In the laſt place, the temper of CHRIST was *pious* and *devout*. — His whole life was one continued courſe of obedience to the will of GOD. Every benevolent action which he performed towards mankind, proceeded from a regard to the divine authority, and was, in his eſtimation, doing the will of him that ſent him. And it was his greateſt conſolation and joy, at the cloſe of his life, that he could make this appeal to heaven: "Father, I have glorified thee on earth, I have finiſhed the work which thou gaveſt me to do." He aſcribed all his wiſdom and power to Almighty GOD. "My doctrine (ſaith he) is not mine, but his that ſent me. The ſon can do nothing of himſelf, but the Father which ſent him he doeth the works." He frequently retired from the ac-

tive ſervices to which he had devoted his life, for the purpoſes of devotion. He committed himſelf to the direction of his heavenly Father, in the execution of his office, and relied on his wiſdom and goodneſs for the ſucceſs of his undertaking. He ſupported himſelf under all his tribulations, by the aſſurance which he had of the divine approbation, and by the hope of the joy which was ſet before him. And even in the immediate expectation of the moſt painful ſufferings and cruel death, he ſaid, with the moſt perfect reſignation, "Not my will, but thine be done."

Such, my brethren, was the temper — ſuch was the heart of JESUS. It was humble — meek — peaceable — heroic — benevolent — friendly — forgiving — and pious. — "Let this mind be in you which was alſo in CHRIST JESUS." Contemplate the actions of his life, till you have imbibed

bibed his ſentiments — till you are inſpired with his ſpirit. This will give you a more juſt claim to the character of chriſtians, than the moſt zealous profeſſion of particular ſyſtems of faith, or the moſt exact obſervance of external rites and forms of religion. This will ſecure you the approbation of that Being, who knoweth the ſecrets of all hearts, and, before all things, requireth a pure and upright mind. And, finally, this will prepare you for a ſtate of perfect virtue and conſummate felicity in the world to come:

To which may GOD, in his great mercy, conduct us all! Amen.

SERMON

SERMON X.

ON THE IMITATION OF GOD.

Εὖ γαρ δὴ ὁ ἀποφηνάμενος, τὶ θεοῖς ὅμοιον ἔχοιμεν, "ενεργεσίαν," ειπε, "και αλήθειαν."

PYTHAG. ap. LONGIN.

SERMON X.

EPHESIANS V. 1.

Be ye therefore followers of GOD.

IT is evident from experience, that there is a natural and powerful propenſity in the human mind towards imitation. This principle appears with the firſt dawn of reaſon, and accompanies us thro' all the ſtages of life. It eſtabliſhes the opinions of the greater part of mankind, on almoſt every ſubject of enquiry; and particularly on that which is of the higheſt importance, religion.

Nay,

Nay, it is this principle which is chiefly concerned in forming the tempers and characters of men. Children naturally purſue the ſame track with their parents; and, at leaſt in the earlier part of life, generally imitate their virtues and their faults, without diſtinction. And, when it might be expected that we ſhould learn to think and act for ourſelves, we have ſeldom reſolution ſufficient ſeriouſly to apply to the ſtudy of wiſdom; we chooſe rather to be led by the humours and paſſions of others, than to obey the dictates of our own reaſon; — to "follow a multitude, tho' it be to do evil," than to be at the pains of "pondering the path of our feet, that all our ways may be eſtabliſhed."

Now, ſince this is the real ſtate of human nature, and ſince every attempt to eradicate this principle from our minds would be abſurd and fruitleſs; we ought to make it ſubſervient to the intereſts of virtue, by continu-

ally

ally placing the moſt excellent examples before our eyes. We ſhould attentively obſerve the conduct of thoſe around us, who are diſtinguiſhed by their piety and goodneſs — we ſhould frequently converſe with the hiſtory of paſt ages, and bring before our imaginations the moſt venerable and worthy characters of antiquity; — and, more eſpecially, we ſhould contemplate the perfect pattern which our Saviour hath ſet before us, to inſpire ourſelves with a ſpirit of emulation, and an earneſt deſire of making the higheſt poſſible attainments in virtue. But the character which is, of all others, moſt worthy of our imitation, is that to which the Apoſtle directs the attention of his fellow-chriſtians, in the text; "Be ye therefore followers of GOD."

The Almighty is, doubtleſs, in many reſpects, infinitely exalted above our imitation, or even our conceptions. That boundleſs power

power, which formed and ſuſtains the univerſe — that preſence, which filleth heaven and earth — that wiſdom, which maintains the order and beauty of nature, without the leaſt interruption or deviation, are attributes, which it is impoſſible for us to imitate — of which we muſt always have confuſed and imperfect ideas. "Such knowledge is too wonderful for us; it is high, we cannot attain unto it." —— Nevertheleſs, this great Being hath not wholly withdrawn himſelf from the view of mortals, or hidden his glories in impenetrable darkneſs. Whatever it is of importance for us to know concerning him is ſufficiently manifeſted, in the frame and conſtitution of the world, in the conduct of his providence, and in the holy ſcriptures. And, if we place him before our view in the light in which theſe repreſent him, we ſhall behold the moſt glorious and excellent, the moſt amiable and delightful object, which we can poſſibly contemplate; —— we ſhall

have

have a pattern before us worthy of our moſt conſtant and careful imitation.

Let us then, at this time, apply our attention to this intereſting ſubject; and ſurvey, with reverence, admiration, and love, that exalted and perfect character which the Apoſtle, in the text, recommends to our imitation.

If we would expreſs the divine character in one comprehenſive word, we cannot do it ſo properly, as in the language of the Apoſtle *John*; — "GOD IS LOVE." — May we not reaſonably conclude, that the Almighty *is* good, ſince we have ſo many convincing proofs that he *doth* good continually? If we attentively obſerve the works of his hands, will they not teach us, that the only principle which influences him in all his operations is benevolence? Why hath he formed ſuch an infinite variety of creatures, all capable of enjoyment, according to their ſeveral natures,

and made the moſt abundant proviſion for their ſupport and comfort? To what ſhall we aſcribe it, that the Father of all upholdeth the world which he hath made, by his power, and watcheth over his whole family in heaven and earth, by his providence? Wherefore is it, that he "cauſeth graſs to grow for cattle, and herb for the ſervice of man" — that he "openeth his hand, and ſatisfieth the deſire of every living thing" — that he "daily loadeth us with his benefits," and "giveth us richly all things to enjoy?" —— It is "becauſe his mercy endureth for ever."

And have we not ſufficient evidence to prove, that the ſame diſpoſition to communicate happineſs, which appears in the eſtabliſhed courſe of nature, likewiſe directs the Supreme Being, in the moral government of his rational offſpring? — Is it on account of any benefit, which the great

First Cauſe of all things, and Fountain of all good, can receive from us, that he demands our obedience? "Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wiſe may be profitable unto himſelf? Is it any advantage to the Almighty, that we are righteous? or is it gain to him, that we make our way perfect?" — It is impoſſible. Why then doth he require from us an exact conformity to the eternal laws of virtue, but becauſe he knows — that by diſobeying them we ſhall certainly involve ourſelves in miſery — and that a ſtrict and conſtant obſervance of them is the only way to ſecure our own peace and welfare?

Shall we not, likewiſe, aſcribe it to the moſt perfect benevolence, and tender mercy, that the Almighty raiſed up his Son JESUS CHRIST to be the Meſſenger of truth and grace unto the world? Wherefore did he appoint him to become the divine Inſtructor

and Saviour of mankind? Wherefore did he endue him with wiſdom and power equal to theſe important characters? Wherefore did he employ him to lead men to the true knowledge and practice of religion — to exhibit before them a moſt perfect pattern of all virtue — to give them the moſt uſeful and important precepts for the conduct of life — and to enforce a regard to them, by denouncing final condemnation upon all the workers of iniquity, and promiſing eternal life to all the righteous? — Wherefore hath he thus amply provided for our moral and religious improvement, and our final happineſs? — Becauſe "he delighteth in mercy." "In this was the love of GOD manifeſted towards us, becauſe that GOD ſent his well beloved Son into the world, that we might live thro' him."

Nay, may we not add, that the Almighty manifeſts his goodneſs and mercy, even in the

the puniſhments which he inflicts upon the wicked? He doth not puniſh them to indulge a vindictive diſpoſition in himſelf, or to ſatisfy his own juſtice. He knows no other juſtice, than that which the reformation of offenders, or the general good of his creatures, requires. He is "the Lord God merciful and gracious, long ſuffering and abundant in goodneſs and truth, keeping mercy for thouſands, forgiving iniquity, tranſgreſſion, and ſin." And, when it becomes neceſſary that he ſhould cauſe the wicked to "reap the fruit of his doings," he always proportions the puniſhment to the character and circumſtances of the offender, and even "in the midſt of judgment remembers mercy."

Such are the conceptions, which the works of nature, the diſpenſations of providence, and the language of the holy ſcriptures, concur to give us of Almighty GOD. They

inſtruct us to conceive of him as a being who delighteth in the exerciſe of goodneſs — who employeth his infinite wiſdom and power in the accompliſhment of his benevolent purpoſes — who is righteous and merciful, even in the judgments which he executeth — and, in a word, who is "good unto all, and whoſe tender mercies are over all his works."

Wherein, then, doth the imitation of the Supreme Being conſiſt? By what means ſhall we obey the precept of the text, and become "followers of GOD?" Moſt certainly — by being and doing good. The faireſt image of God on earth is the heart of a good man. —— Would you therefore, be followers of GOD, as dear children — "walk in love." Cultivate that benevolence in your own minds, which you admire and eſteem in the Father of mercies. "Put away far from you, all bitterneſs, and wrath

wrath, and anger, and evil-ſpeaking, with all malice; and be kindly affectioned one towards another." Let your good-will for your brethren always reſtrain you from acts of injuſtice, fraud, or violence, and prompt you to "render unto all their due." Accuſtom yourſelves to regard the intereſts of others as your own. Labour to acquire that ſenſibility and generoſity of diſpoſition, which will render you active in the ſervice of others, and lead you, as you have opportunity, to do good unto all men. Live to make your relatives and friends, and all with whom you are connected, happy. More eſpecially, cultivate that humane and compaſſionate temper, which will incline you to employ your utmoſt abilities for the aſſiſtance and relief of the neceſſitous and afflicted. Exclude not even the unkind and undeſerving from your charitable notice. "Love your enemies; bleſs them that curſe you; do good to them that hate you; and pray

for

for them which deſpitefully uſe you and perſecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his ſun to riſe on the evil, and on the good, and ſendeth rain on the juſt and on the unjuſt." Learn to exerciſe forbearance and forgiveneſs towards thoſe who have injured or offended you, from the example of him, who is "ſlow to anger, and ready to forgive." Finally, if, at any time, your own ſecurity, or the peace and welfare of ſociety, require that you ſhould take ſome notice of the injuries which have been offered you; let your reſentment be governed by reaſon, and reſtrained by benevolence; purſue the moſt probable methods in your power to reclaim your adverſary; and treat him with all the lenity which the nature of the caſe will permit.

Thus

Thus uniformly to deſire and purſue the happineſs of all around us, and to take pleaſure in doing good, is to reſemble the greateſt and beſt of all beings; — it is to manifeſt that we are, indeed, the children of GOD, by bearing his image, in that perfection which is his higheſt glory; — it is, according to our nature and capacity, to "be perfect as our Father which is in heaven is perfect."

And where can we find an object ſo well worthy of our imitation, as the Supreme Being? The brighteſt characters, among our fellow-creatures, are ſhaded with imperfections. In the imitation of theſe, it is requiſite that we ſhould uſe great caution and circumſpection, leſt, while we imagine that we are emulating their virtues, we ſhould only be copying their faults. But we may imitate the Divine Character, without the leaſt danger of being

ing led aſtray. Nay, the more cloſely we adhere to this pattern, the more amiable and excellent ſhall we become. — Nor is it poſſible, while we have this perfect example before our eyes, that we ſhould ever want an object to fire our emulation, or a motive to excite our induſtry: for to whatever heights of goodneſs we may arrive, we ſhall be ſtill far ſhort of the mark at which we aim — we ſhall have a field of improvement before us, boundleſs as eternity itſelf. — Is not the Almighty the ſource and ſtandard of all excellence? Doth not every thing which is fair and beautiful in the material, and every thing which is lovely and excellent in the intellectual world, proceed from the great Author of nature? If then we meet with ſo much to excite our admiration, and attract our love, in the creature, what excellence and perfection muſt reſide in the Creator! How amiable, how glorious muſt be.

be the Eternal Father, in whom all that is beautiful and good centres, and from whom, as from an inexhauſtible fountain, it is diffuſed throughout the univerſe! What more effectual method can we purſue, to exalt our nature, and acquire intrinſic and eminent worth, than to "ſet the Lord always before us"? Or what higher ſatisfaction can we poſſibly feel, than that which ariſeth from a conſciouſneſs of having the image of GOD impreſſed upon our hearts? Surely the man, who can trace a reſemblance to the Supreme Being in his own character, may contemplate the likeneſs with a laudable and virtuous pride, and, in the meaneſt or moſt afflicted condition of human life, may be ſatisfied from himſelf.

Farther, is not the imitation of GOD the moſt probable means of gaining the eſteem and affection of all wiſe and good men?

men? Is there any thing which can be ſaid concerning a man, which will give the world an higher idea of his character than this — that he is poſſeſſed of a divine and godlike temper?—The man who, from the overflowings of a benevolent heart, is continually diffuſing ſtreams of happineſs thro' the little circle of his friends and acquaintance, and, like the Almighty Father of all, takes delight in doing good, is an object of univerſal eſteem and love. His name is always mentioned with reſpect —his company is every where acceptable — his friendſhip is highly valued —every good man rejoices in his proſperity — when he falls into calamity, every tender and generous heart laments his misfortunes, and is willing to aſſiſt him — and when he leaves the world, his good deeds are had in everlaſting remembrance. — How then, can the moſt boundleſs

ambition

ambition be more completely gratified, than by the imitation of the divine goodneſs?

Moreover, are not thoſe who are followers of GOD, in the certain road to happineſs? The moſt natural and obvious idea which we can form of the divine felicity is, that it conſiſteth in a conſciouſneſs of being able and diſpoſed to communicate happineſs to the whole creation, and in the actual exertion of unlimited power, for this purpoſe. And it is likewiſe manifeſt, that the nearer we approach to the Almighty in goodneſs, the greater ſatisfaction and felicity we ſhall enjoy. Doth not the experience of every good man teſtify, that there is nothing, which can afford us ſuch ſubſtantial and ſatisfying delight, as the performance of kind and generous actions? —Viſit the habitations of honeſt poverty, in which an affectionate and virtuous pair are employing all their induſtry

and ſtrength, to provide a coarſe and ſcanty ſubſiſtence for themſelves and their numerous offspring. If you find their brows wrinkled with care, and their hearts oppreſſed with anxiety, introduce among them the welcome ſtranger, joy —— if you ſee them contented and thankful in their humble ſtation, and uniting their utmoſt endeavours to make it as eaſy and happy as poſſible, reward their induſtry and chearfulneſs —— by an unexpected and liberal benefaction. —— If you have a friend, who hath met with misfortunes and loſſes, and is reduced to circumſtances of great perplexity and want; viſit him with the ſame freedom, and converſe with him with the ſame confidence and affection, as in the days of his proſperity; — convince him that you are not one of thoſe ſummer-friends, who, when the winter of adverſity approacheth, diſappear; — employ yourſelf, with zeal and ſpirit, in his ſervice;

vice; — and contribute, to the utmoſt of your ability, towards his relief. —— Go to the houſe of mourning, and there "weep with thoſe who weep." Tenderly ſympathize with ſuch as are lamenting the loſs of relatives or friends; endeavour to ſooth and alleviate their ſorrows, and to miniſter conſolation to their hearts. "Viſit the fatherleſs and widows in their affliction"; and, if you have opportunity, lighten the burden of their griefs, by affording them your aſſiſtance and protection. If you ſee them in danger of ſuffering by the cruel hand of injuſtice or oppreſſion, become their guardian and defender; and thus "cauſe the widow's heart to ſing for joy," and bring "the bleſſing of him that was ready to periſh upon you." —— By ſuch actions as theſe, imitate the example of *Jeſus*, who "went about doing good," and of the Father of mankind, whoſe mercy is everlaſting. You

will then enjoy the moſt ſatisfactory and delightful conviction, that there is a divine pleaſure in beneficence, with which no other gratification deſerves to be compared, and that goodneſs, independent of all its conſequences, is its own reward. You will then underſtand the meaning of this ſaying of a *Roman* Emperor; "No muſic is ſo pleaſing in mine ears as the requeſts of my friends, and the ſupplications of thoſe who need my aſſiſtance."

To this we may add, in the laſt place, that the Supreme Being, who is conſcious of his own excellence and perfection, muſt, doubtleſs, take pleaſure in beholding his image upon his offspring, and muſt be always ready to aſſiſt, encourage, and reward their endeavours to acquire a more complete reſemblance of himſelf. Accordingly, we have ſeen, that, in the eſtabliſhed courſe of things, and by the appointment

pointment of GOD, to imitate the divine goodneſs is to ſecure the comfort and happineſs of this life. And we are taught by the holy ſcriptures, that thoſe who are like unto GOD on earth, ſhall dwell with him for ever, in his heavenly kingdom.

The ſum of what hath been ſaid is this — that the Imitation of GOD is the nobleſt employment of our rational powers — the ſure foundation of eſteem among men — a never-failing ſource of peace and happineſs to our own minds—and the certain way to obtain the approbation of the Almighty, and prepare ourſelves for everlaſting life.

" Be ye *therefore* followers of GOD."

SERMON XI.

ON HAPPINESS.

O Curas hominum! O quantum est in rebus inane!

PERS.

SERMON XI.

LUKE X. 41, 42.

And Jeſus anſwered and ſaid unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful; and Mary hath choſen that good part, which ſhall not be taken away from her.

AS there is nothing in which mankind are more univerſally agreed, than in their deſire of happineſs; ſo there is ſcarcely any thing wherein they differ more, than in the objects from which they ſeek their chief good. — One man is fond of eaſe

eaſe and indulgence, and fancies that, if he can diveſt his heart of care, and command thoſe things which are neceſſary to the gratification of his appetites, he ſhall be happy. — Another makes riches the principal object of his purſuit, and ſets no bounds to his avaricious deſires. From year to year he labours and toils to encreaſe his ſtores; till that, which he at firſt purſued only as a ſubordinate means of happineſs, becomes itſelf the ſole object of his affection, and he lives for no other purpoſe than to be rich. — A third is captivated by the charms of grandeur and power. A numerous retinue, magnificent edifices, elegance of dreſs, and titles of diſtinction, are the things which chiefly attract his notice, and excite his envy. To enjoy the ſmiles of his ſuperiors — to have a number of needy and fawning ſycophants waiting around him — to exerciſe an uncontrouled dominion over his

his dependents — to command reſpect and deference wherever he comes — and to be able to raiſe the ignorant admiration, and gain the unmeaning applauſe of the vulgar — this is the ſum of his wiſhes, and the height of his ambition. — Another, convinced of the folly of theſe purſuits, or averſe to the hurry and diſſipation of active life, withdraws himſelf from the world, and devotes his days to contemplation and ſtudy. Deſpiſing alike the deluſive dreams of pleaſure, the dazzling ſplendors of greatneſs, and the ſordid love of gain, he ſeeks a happineſs more worthy of his rational nature, in a diligent enquiry after truth, and a careful cultivation of his intellectual powers.

Nay, we not only ſee this variety of opinions and purſuits in different perſons, but we may frequently obſerve it in the ſame individual, at different periods of his life,

life, or upon any remarkable change in his condition. The gayety and extravagance of youthful pleaſures are often ſucceeded by the carefulneſs and ſolicitude of avarice; and diſappointed ambition frequently creates a diſſatisfaction with the world, and a fondneſs for the employments and amuſements of contemplative life. — Thus do men wander from place to place, and from object to object, in purſuit of happineſs, and, like the woman whom our Saviour addreſſed in the words of the text, are "careful and troubled about many things."

Since this is the caſe, it is, doubtleſs, of great importance, that we ſhould form a juſt eſtimate concerning the real value of the ſeveral objects, which invite our attention as ſources or means of happineſs. This alone can preſerve us from groundleſs expectations, fruitleſs purſuits, and

and painful diſappointments. — Now, to aſſiſt us in determining the intrinſic and comparative worth of the ſeveral good things which lie within the reach of mankind, and to enable us to judge what is worthy of our principal attention, and what may with propriety be ſtiled our chief good, let us fix upon ſome general rules or marks, by which, as by a common ſtandard, every thing which ſeems to promiſe happineſs to mankind may be meaſured. —— It cannot be difficult to determine what are the proper rules of judging on this head. Every man would, doubtleſs, wiſh to find the object in which he places his chief felicity, poſſeſſed of ſuch properties as theſe; — that it ſhould be adapted to afford him ſatisfaction and enjoyment, or ſhould be *conducive to his well-being*; — that it ſhould be *agreeable to his nature*; — that it ſhould be *derived from himſelf*, and entirely *independent* upon

the will of others; — that it ſhould continue *the ſame at all times, and in all places*; — and that it ſhould be *capable of being enjoyed, as long as he continues to exiſt.* (a) It is evident, that thoſe objects alone, which have ſome tendency, either real or imaginary, to promote our enjoyment, pleaſure, or ſatisfaction, are concerned in the queſtion before us. And it is ſcarcely leſs evident, that only thoſe purſuits, which are agreeable to our nature, can be productive of our happineſs. For, every creature being formed for the enjoyment of a felicity ſuited to its nature, and incapable of any other, every deviation from nature muſt be a diminution of its happineſs. — It is alſo very deſirable, that our happineſs ſhould ſpring from ourſelves, and not from the uncertain and capricious humours of our fellow-creatures, or from any other external cauſe. And it is of great im-

(a) See *Harris*'s Dialogue on Happineſs.

portance

portance that it ſhould be of ſuch a ſtable and permanent nature, that no change of place or circumſtances ſhould be able to rob us of our treaſure. It ſhould accompany us thro' all the active ſcenes of life, and follow us into our moſt ſolitary and ſilent retreat: it ſhould attend us thro' all the viciſſitudes of proſperity and adverſity: it ſhould be the joy of our youthful days, the comfort of our riper years, and the ſupport of our advanced age: it ſhould be our companion on the bed of ſickneſs, and in the vale of death; and it ſhould never forſake us, while we are capable of perceiving the difference between happineſs and miſery—that is, while we have any being. Whatever is defective in any of theſe particulars is ſo far incapable of yielding us true felicity, and unworthy of being purſued as our chief good. — Let us apply theſe rules to the ſeveral objects which are moſt eagerly pur-

ſued by mankind, and from which they ſeem to entertain the moſt ſanguine expectations of happineſs.

Let us, in the firſt place, examine *the purſuits of ambition.* —— It will not be denied that there is a real gratification, eſpecially to ſome minds, in a conſciouſneſs of ſuperiority and dominion. A man whoſe ruling principle is pride and vanity — when he is ſurrounded with the dazzling diſtinctions of greatneſs and power— courted, careſſed and flattered by his friends and dependents — and admired, applauded and obeyed by the multitude — will naturally be elated with the idea of his own importance, and feel his heart flutter with tumultuous joy. But if, on the other hand, we conſider the conſtant anxieties, and frequent diſappointments, which attend the purſuits of honour — the danger, which thoſe who are eager in this

purſuit

purſuit run, of violating their conſciences, and laying a foundation for painful reflections — the perpetual hurry and fatigue of an exalted and public ſtation — and the mortification which always accompanies the loſs of dignity and power; if we lay all theſe circumſtances into the balance againſt the gratifications of ambition, we may perhaps ſee reaſon to queſtion whether they are on the whole to be deſired.

However, if it be allowed that ambition is in itſelf a natural paſſion and productive of real pleaſure, it cannot be denied, that it frequently leads men aſtray from the paths which nature and reaſon have pointed out, and tempts them to violate the ſacred laws of juſtice, honour, and benevolence. Diſſimulation and flattery, falſehood and fraud, violence and oppreſſion are too frequently the ſteps to preferment and power. — But, ſuppoſing it poſſible

poſſible for us to obtain them without the leaſt departure from nature, we ſhall, nevertheleſs, find them very inſufficient ſources of happineſs, in many other reſpects.

They are not derived from ourſelves, and therefore are not at our own command. It is, at any time, in the power of caprice or malice, or of a thouſand unavoidable accidents, to diſconcert our ſchemes and fruſtrate our expectations. So that, if we have reached the ſummit of human glory, we muſt aſk leave of the world to continue there. — And beſides this, how long ſoever we may be ſuffered to poſſeſs the ſtation which we have gained, it is only while we are actually ſurrounded with the ſplendors, and partaking of the honours, which wait upon greatneſs and authority, that they are capable of affording us pleaſure and enjoyment. When we are withdrawn from the world, and retired

retired within ourſelves — when our paſſions are huſhed, and reaſon is ſuffered to reſume her ſeat, the luſtre of theſe objects diſappears; we feel that they can entertain and delight us, no longer than while they are beheld by others as well as ourſelves; the mind wants ſomething more ſubſtantial, than outward appearances and empty titles, on which to reſt, and looks with indifference on all the imaginary diſtinctions, which ſubſiſt in human life. And, how much more will this be the caſe, when the gay and buſy ſcenes of public life ſhall be exchanged for the retirement of a ſick room — when all our flattering proſpects, and towering hopes, muſt be buried with us in the grave! What will it then avail a man that he hath lived in ſplendor, and fared ſumptuouſly every day? Will the remembrance of this alleviate his pains, ſupport his departing ſpirit, or give him confidence towards GOD? Will not all

all the glories of this world then vaniſh for ever, like a dream and viſion of the night?

Let us now turn our thoughts to *the purſuits of avarice*, and examine what pretenſions riches have to be choſen as our chief good. — Few perſons will be ſeriouſly diſpoſed to queſtion, whether riches are to be deſired and ſought as means of enjoyment and happineſs. They are doubtleſs capable of being applied to almoſt every important purpoſe of life, and, by a prudent management, may become ſubſervient to the pleaſures of animal nature, of intellectual improvement, of friendſhip, and even of virtue and religion. Nor can it be matter of debate, whether it be agreeable to nature to purſue that which, in ſo many important reſpects, is capable of contributing to our happineſs. It is indeed true, that wealth may be purſued in a manner

manner inconſiſtent with nature and reaſon, as it always is, when injuſtice, oppreſſion, and cruelty are made uſe of to attain it; and that it may be employed to the prejudice of its poſſeſſors and the injury of mankind: but it is no leſs true, that it may be purſued and obtained with innocence, and may be applied to the moſt laudable and beneficial purpoſes.

It ought, however, to be remembered, that the acquiſition and ſecure enjoyment of wealth depends, not upon ourſelves alone, but upon a great variety of external circumſtances. A ſingle incident, which it is not in our power to prevent or foreſee, may render thoſe ſchemes abortive, which were moſt judiciouſly concerted and ſteadily executed. Or, whatever ſucceſs we may meet with in the purſuit of wealth, we muſt always hold it by a moſt uncertain and precarious tenure. Riches, without

out aſking the conſent of their poſſeſſors, often " make to themſelves wings, and fly away, as an eagle towards heaven." The time, at leaſt, will ſhortly come, when we muſt leave our wealth to others; " for we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out." — And even while we are in poſſeſſon of riches, what can they do to befriend us, under the unavoidable trials and calamities of life? Can they remove the pains of an afflicted body, or miniſter conſolation to a wounded ſpirit? Can they ſupply the loſs of valuable friends, or arm us againſt the fears of our own diſſolution? In circumſtances like theſe alas! all the riches and honours of the world will prove but miſerable comforters. On the whole, the experience of mankind confirms the truth of *Solomon*'s obſervation: " He that loveth ſilver ſhall not be ſatisfied with ſilver, nor he that loveth abundance with increaſe."

The

The objects which next offer themſelves to our conſideration as fruitful ſources of happineſs, and which multitudes purſue as their chief good, are *the pleaſures of ſenſe*. Under this head we may comprehend every gratification of our animal appetites, and all thoſe amuſements and diverſions, which are either naturally, or by means of an acquired taſte, adapted to pleaſe our ſenſes, or entertain and delight our imaginations. — Now, it will be readily and thankfully acknowledged, by all who are true friends of virtue, and who ſincerely revere and love the great Author of our nature, that theſe pleaſures are a part of that portion of good, which is provided for us, and of which we may and ought to partake. Pleaſure and happineſs are terms of the ſame import; and it were abſurd to attempt a diſtinction between them. To purſue theſe, wherever we have a

proſpect of finding them, muſt always be natural and reaſonable.

But, at the ſame time, it is to be conſidered, that we are capable of nobler pleaſures than thoſe of ſenſe, and conſequently that, if we confine ourſelves to theſe, our enjoyment muſt be partial and incomplete. We ſhould likewiſe remember, that theſe objects are not in their own nature worthy of our ſupreme regard, and that, if we purſue them in ſubordination to the higher delights of reaſon, virtue, and religion, we ſhall enjoy them in their utmoſt perfection. We cannot entirely devote ourſelves to theſe pleaſures, without frequently departing from the ſuperior principles of nature, honour and benevolence, and without falling into thoſe exceſſes which would in the end, prove fatal to our happineſs.

Moreover,

Moreover, theſe enjoyments muſt depend upon a variety of circumſtances, which are not in our own power. Fortune muſt have beſtowed her gifts upon us with a liberal hand; our bodily conſtitutions muſt be in a healthful and vigorous ſtate; and we muſt have companions to aſſiſt us in our purſuits, and partake with us in our pleaſures. This ſpecies of happineſs muſt therefore always be uncertain and precarious. And thoſe who poſſeſs it, in the greateſt perfection, muſt find their moments of enjoyment ſhort and tranſient, and muſt be obliged to paſs through frequent diſagreeable intervals of ſolitude and inaction. Before the actual poſſeſſion of theſe pleaſures the mind is generally agitated with painful ſolicitude; and when they are paſt, they frequently leave it in a ſtate of ſatiety and diſguſt. Or, if this ſhould for a while be prevented by the vigour and ſprightlineſs of youth, or by the charms of

novelty and variety; the frequent repetition of the ſame ſcenes will at length render them inſipid and tireſome; the edge of inclination and appetite muſt at length be blunted; the powers of perception and imagination muſt by degrees fail; and nature muſt, at laſt, ſink into decay. The evil days ſhall come, when the voluptuary, who hath ſpent his life in one continual round of amuſement and indulgence, ſhall ſay, "I have no pleaſure in them."

Let us now proceed, in the laſt place, briefly to examine, by the ſame rules, *a life of retirement and contemplation.* —— To apply ourſelves to the purſuit of knowledge is doubtleſs highly commendable. It is a natural and proper employment of our intellectual powers; it may afford us a variety of rational and manly pleaſures; and it may be of important advantage to ſociety. But even this is not worthy to be

be conſidered as our chief good. For, if mankind in general were to devote themſelves intirely to contemplation and ſtudy, it is evident that the bands of ſocial life muſt be diſſolved — the ſocial affections, which are the moſt amiable part of our nature, muſt remain uncultivated, and the numerous advantages and comforts of ſociety muſt be reſigned. Beſides, even theſe pleaſures, in a great meaſure, depend on a variety of accidental circumſtances, ſuch as health of body, ſtrength of genius, an affluent fortune, and the encouragement and aſſiſtance of others. It would be impoſſible to enjoy them, without frequent interruptions from the neceſſary concerns of life — from afflictions or misfortunes — or from our unavoidable connexions with others. Nor would even theſe pleaſures be able to accompany us to the bed of ſickneſs or death, unleſs we were, at the ſame time, to enjoy a conſciouſneſs, that we have

faithfully employed our knowledge in the ſervice of mankind: and, in this caſe, our pleaſures would be of a different kind from thoſe of contemplation and ſcience, and, would coincide with thoſe hereafter to be recommended, as moſt worthy of our purſuit.

We have now examined the principal objects which engage the attention of mankind, by certain general and obvious rules, and have ſeen that neither honour — riches — the pleaſures of ſenſe — or even the purſuit of knowledge, are worthy to be conſidered as our chief good. Having weighed each of theſe objects in the ſcale of reaſon and truth, we have found them wanting. — Wealth and power may indeed furniſh us with many advantages for the enjoyment of life; the pleaſures of ſenſe are on their own account to be deſired; and the cultivation of our intellectual

tual powers is rational and uſeful. But let us make none of theſe things the principal objects of our deſire and purſuit; for they will often lead us to deviate from the path of nature and truth — they are not derived from ourſelves, but are dependent on a thouſand external and caſual circumſtances — the happineſs which they afford cannot be enjoyed at all times and in all places — and the continuance of it is, from the nature of things, precarious and temporary. — Let us then allow to theſe things, only that ſhare of our attention and regard, which their real nature and intrinſic value may juſtly claim. Inſtead of wandering from object to object, in ſearch of that happineſs which they are alike incapable of affording us; — inſtead of being careful and troubled about many things; let us ſteadily and uniformly apply ourſelves to the purſuit of that one thing, which alone will be found,

upon fair and impartial examination, to be the proper happineſs of man. What this *one thing needful* is, and by what means we may obtain "that good part which cannot be taken from us," will be ſhewn in the following diſcourſe.

SERMON

SERMON XII.

ON HAPPINESS.

—Quæ poſſit facere et ſervare beatum.

HOR.

SERMON XII.

LUKE X. 41, 42.

And Jeſus anſwered and ſaid unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful; and Mary hath choſen that good part, which ſhall not be taken away from her.

WHAT is the proper happineſs of mankind, or by what means we may arrive at the higheſt felicity of which human nature is capable, is an enquiry of the utmoſt importance — an enquiry to which every man muſt wiſh to receive a ſatisfactory

ſatisfactory anſwer. To aſſiſt us in forming a judgment on this intereſting ſubject, it was propoſed, in the preceding diſcourſe, to examine the ſeveral objects or purſuits which ſolicit our attention in the pleaſing dreſs of happineſs, by certain general and obvious rules, which may ſerve to determine their intrinſic and comparative worth. It was then obſerved, that whatever deſerves to be ſtiled our chief good, muſt be agreeable to our nature—conducive to our well-being—derived from ourſelves and independent of external cauſes—ſuited to all times, places, and conditions—and capable of being enjoyed as long as we continue to exiſt. By theſe rules we examined the reſpective claims of greatneſs and power — of wealth and abundance — of the pleaſures of ſenſe—and of a ſtudious and contemplative life; and found them all, in many particulars, greatly defective. But let not theſe repeated

diſappointments

diſappointments diſhearten us from purſuing the important enquiry; let us not ſit down in deſpair, and ſay, "Lord, why haſt thou made all men in vain?" There is one candidate yet unnoticed, who ſolicits for the honour of being received as our *chief good*, and whoſe aſpect ſeems to promiſe more, than any of thoſe who have hitherto engaged our attention; — her name is VIRTUE; let us examine her pretenſions.

By *Virtue* we are to underſtand, in general, an habitual diſpoſition and conſtant endeavour to do that which is right and good. To be virtuous is to perform whatever our relations and circumſtances in life require from us, and, at all times, and in every condition, to act agreeably to the deliberate judgment and conviction of our own minds. Now, this uprightneſs of intention, together with the rectitude

and

and goodneſs of character which neceſſarily flow from it, bids fair to yield us the greateſt ſhare of happineſs of which human nature is capable, and appears to be worthy of our chief attention and regard, as *the one thing needful:* for,

In the firſt place, it is perfectly agreeable to our nature. — Virtue hath often, and with the utmoſt propriety, been defined, acting according to nature. Every branch of a virtuous character perfectly agrees with this definition. — What are the duties of *temperance* and *ſobriety*, but a natural and becoming uſe of our rational powers in the government of our animal appetites and paſſions? Is it not the manifeſt deſign of our maker, that our reaſon ſhould be employed for this purpoſe? And, in all exceſſive and vicious indulgences, do we not neglect the exerciſe of our nobleſt faculties, and groſsly deviate

deviate from the path in which nature would teach us to walk? —As reaſonable beings, what can be more natural, than that we ſhould deliberate concerning the qualities and iſſues of our actions, and exerciſe that caution and circumſpection in the conduct of life, in which *prudence*, one principal part of a virtuous character, conſiſts?—Such is the ſtate of human nature, that we are expoſed to innumerable dangers, and muſt inevitably meet with troubles and calamities of various kinds. Now, a timorous and puſillanimous diſpoſition will involve us in many diſtreſſes, which we might otherwiſe have eſcaped, and will greatly encreaſe the unavoidable burdens of life. Our nature and ſituation therefore requires, that we ſhould cultivate reſolution and *fortitude*.

All the moral offices of ſocial life have, likewiſe, their foundation in nature. Man

is evidently formed for ſociety. In a ſtate of perpetual ſolitude, the ſeeds of benevolence, compaſſion, friendſhip and love would lie for ever unfolded, and there would be an uncomfortable void in the heart, which nothing would be able to fill up. Nature prompts, and even compels us to form ourſelves into ſocieties, for our mutual preſervation, ſecurity and happineſs; and it is only in large and well-regulated communities, that the conveniences and pleaſures of life can be enjoyed, with the greateſt advantage — that uſeful arts can be properly encouraged and improved — and that human nature can riſe to that perfection, in intellectual and moral accompliſhments, of which it is capable. A ſtate of ſociety, then, in which the human mind can unfold and exert all its powers, and not a ſtate of barbariſm, is properly a ſtate of nature. Now, if ſociety be natural, all thoſe virtues which tend to promote

promote its order and happineſs muſt be ſo likewiſe. To abſtain from acts of violence, oppreſſion and fraud — to be upright and honourable in all our dealings —to be faithful to our engagements, and ſincere in our profeſſions — to diſcharge the duties of our domeſtic relations with fidelity and chearfulneſs — to ſhew compaſſion to the afflicted, and relieve the wants of the poor and needy — in a word, to "do unto others, as we would that they ſhould do unto us," is unqueſtionably to contribute our part towards the peace and happineſs of ſociety, and conſequently to act agreeably to nature.

In fine, if we conſider the duties of piety and religion, we ſhall find them all to be founded on the nature of things, and the relations in which we ſtand to our maker. Doth not nature teach us, to venerate infinite perfection and excellence

— to be thankful for innumerable and ineſtimable bleſſings — to acknowledge and adore that providence which ruleth over all — to confide, with perfect ſatisfaction, in that wiſdom and goodneſs, which ordereth all things for the beſt — and to ſubmit ourſelves to the will of that Being, whoſe laws are all holy, juſt and good? —— Virtue, in all its branches, is then nothing more than a perfect conformity to nature.

I add, ſecondly, uprightneſs of intention, and goodneſs of character, are evidently conducive to our well-being. — The experience of mankind, indeed, forbids us to aſſert, that virtue will entirely exempt us from affliction and trouble. The beſt of men are liable to ſickneſs and pain of body, and may meet with loſſes and diſappointments in their affairs. The moſt amiable and excellent characters may be traduced

traduced by malice and ſlander. Great and waſting calamities may involve the righteous and the wicked in one common ruin. Tyranny, oppreſſion, or injuſtice may rob even the good man of his poſſeſſions, his liberty, or his life. Integrity and virtue themſelves may ſometimes expoſe a man to difficulties, from which perſons of corrupt principles, and licentious manners, are free. Nay the world hath ſeen inſtances, in which the moſt active public-ſpirit — the moſt diſintereſted benevolence — the moſt intrepid fortitude, and the moſt perfect virtue, have been derided, inſulted, and perſecuted unto death. Even *Jeſus*, the great teacher and pattern of all righteouſneſs — the Saviour of the world — was with wicked hands crucified and ſlain.—All this, however, only proves, that there is no complete happineſs for mankind on earth; and it *may* ſtill be true, that virtue is our higheſt felicity and chief

chief good. Conſider its nature and fruits, and you will be convinced that *it is*, and that therefore it deſerves to be valued and purſued, as the "one thing needful."

One important branch of virtue, namely, the government of ourſelves, hath for its immediate object our own preſervation and happineſs. It is the direct and obvious tendency of ſobriety and prudence, to ſecure to us the moſt perfect and laſting enjoyment of life. And thoſe duties which reſpect our maker, or our brethren, are all attended with ſatisfaction and pleaſure in the performance, and productive of beneficial conſequences to ourſelves. We cannot cultivate the principles of genuine piety, and perform the duties of devotion with attention and ſerioufneſs, without experiencing the rational and ſublime delights of religious veneration, gratitude, confidence and joy. We cannot cheriſh the benevolent

benevolent and friendly affections in our hearts, and accuſtom ourſelves to perform the offices of kindneſs and humanity towards our brethren, without enjoying the nobleſt and moſt ſatisfying pleaſures, of which human nature is capable. We cannot be conſcious, that our minds are adorned with amiable and virtuous diſpoſitions, and that we continually deſire and endeavour to do that which is right, without being poſſeſſed of that peace of mind, and inward ſelf-approbation, which are a perpetual feaſt. This the experience of every pious and good man ſufficiently atteſts.

Moreover, the practice of virtue is the moſt probable means of ſecuring to us the external poſſeſſions and comforts of life. Health and chearfulneſs, and conſequently the true enjoyment of all the pleaſures

of

of ſenſe, greatly depend upon temperance and ſobriety. An upright, honourable and friendly behaviour, can ſcarcely fail of gaining us reputation and eſteem in the world; and a fair character is the moſt obvious and certain path to preferment and wealth. That theſe things are not conſtantly, and without exception, the rewards of virtue, is not owing to any imperfection in virtue itſelf, but ſolely to its preſent imperfect ſtate among mankind. It hath, however, ſo manifeſt a tendency to procure us theſe external advantages, and ſo frequently in fact obtains them, that we may with propriety ſay concerning virtue, "Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour." —Whether, then, we conſider the internal pleaſures, or the external rewards of virtue, we ſhall ſee abundant reaſon to conclude, that it is above all things conducive to our well-being.

In

In the third place; The pleaſures of virtue are derived from ourſelves, and independent of external cauſes. For the riches, the honours, or the pleaſures of the world, we muſt often depend upon a fortunate concurrence of external cauſes, or upon the humour and caprice of mankind; but a man is obliged to aſk leave of none, but GOD and his own heart, to be good. While our maker ſees fit to continue unto us the uſe of our moral faculties, it is in our power to practice the duties, and enjoy the pleaſures of a virtuous life; and this is a power, which neither the ſmiles of the world can give, nor its frowns take away. Treachery and ſlander may caſt us down from the pinnacle of worldly greatneſs; violence or fraud may rob us of our lawful poſſeſſions; envy and ill-nature may interrupt many of the enjoyments of life. But our innocence and integrity, and that ſatisfaction and peace

which

which are their conſtant attendants, are treaſures which we may call our own — treaſures of which neither the malice, nor the ſubtilty of our enemies can ever deprive us. This is "that good part which cannot be taken away from us." Vice may indeed preſent her enſnaring charms before our eyes, to draw us aſide from the paths of uprightneſs; or ſhe may borrow the ſcourge of ridicule, the arrows of ſlander, or the flames of perſecution, to alarm and terrify us. But, if we be fully convinced of the ineſtimable value of an upright and ſelf-approving mind, and ſteadfaſtly reſolved to preſerve our integrity in vain will be all her allurements, and all her terrors; none of theſe things will move us; and we ſhall, after all, have this for "our rejoicing, the teſtimony of our conſciences, that in ſimplicity and godly ſincerity we have had our converſation in the world." While the votaries of avarice, ambition

ambition and ſenſual pleaſure, muſt, in a great meaſure, depend upon others for their happineſs, it is the peculiar felicity of the good man, that he is "ſatisfied from himſelf." — Hence it follows,

Fourthly, That the happineſs which ſprings from virtue is ſuited to all times and places, and to every condition of human life. — We can be in no circumſtances, in which one courſe of action will not be more proper and becoming than any other, and, conſequently, in which it will not be in our power to act a wiſe and virtuous part. No eminence of ſtation, no affluence of fortune, no extent of power, can ſet us free from the obligations of morality and religion. And, on the other hand, however obſcure our ſituation, or however contracted our circumſtances in life may be, we ſhall have a certain ſphere of action, which it will be our

our duty to fill, in the moſt honourable and uſeful manner we are able. The rich and the poor, the powerful and the dependent, the young and the old, perſons of every age, rank and condition, have their reſpective parts aſſigned them, in the great Dama of human life; and the loweſt and moſt inconſiderable, as well as the greateſt and moſt conſpicuous characters, give us an opportunity of acquiring real honour and ſatisfaction from the performance; for this depends, not upon the nature of the part we are to act, but upon the manner in which we perform it. To ſpeak without a figure; we are placed in different ſtations of life, by the wiſe Governor of the world, and have certain duties, which it becomes us to perform in theſe ſtations. And, if we behave agreeably to our condition and ſituation, what ever theſe may be, we ſhall experience the pleaſures which reſult from

a

a conſciouſneſs of upright intentions, and the performance of good actions. And theſe are pleaſures, to which we may have recourſe, in ſolitude and in company, in health and in ſickneſs, in life and in death. —— A peaceful ſelf-approving mind will add new luſtre to the brighteſt ſcenes, and give an additional reliſh to every comfort we enjoy. Its chearing light will even break through the thickeſt clouds of adverſity, and enable us to rejoice in tribulation. The pleaſures of innocence and virtue will remain with us, when every other pleaſure is withdrawn. When every other ſupport fails, a good conſcience will be as an anchor to our ſouls, both ſure and ſteadfaſt. What though our ſubſtance be torn from us by the hand of violence, or deſtroyed by calamitous accidents, and poverty comes upon us like an armed man; our moſt valuable treaſures are ſtill ſecure; we may ſtill be rich in good works, and happy in the

peaceful reflections of our own minds; for "whether a man be rich or poor, if he have a good heart towards the LORD, he ſhall at all times rejoice with a chearful countenance." What though we be rendered incapable of reliſhing the pleaſures of ſenſe, by ſickneſs or pain; we have ſtill a fund of conſolation and pleaſure within, which is ſufficient to comfort us under the heavieſt afflictions, to which human nature is ſubject. What though our deareſt and moſt valuable friends be taken from us; we have ſtill a friend in our own boſoms, who will never forſake us—whoſe preſence will cheer us through life, ſupport us in death, and gain us admiſſion into the manſions of eternal peace and joy. For, I add,

In the laſt place, That the pleaſures of virtue are durable and unfading, and that we may enjoy them, as long as we continue to exiſt. — With whatever degree of

of proſperity and happineſs our days on earth may be crowned, the hour is coming, when riches ſhall not profit us, nor the pleaſures of ſenſe delight us — when friendſhip itſelf ſhall comfort us no more. But even at this hour, if all be right within — if our hearts condemn us not — we cannot be wretched. The righteous hath hope in his death. Conſcious of the uprightneſs of his intentions, and the goodneſs of his character — enjoying the remembrance of a life devoted to the ſervice of mankind, and adorned with a ſeries of virtuous actions; he can leave the world in peace, and look forward, with compoſure, to that unknown ſtate which lies before him. While his friends are weeping around him, and the pains of diſſolution are upon him, he can maintain an unſhaken firmneſs of mind, which will ſpread ſerenity and chearfulneſs over his countenance. He can riſe from the feaſt of human life, ſatisfied and thankful

ful; and can go the way whence he ſhall not return, with a degree of fortitude, which nothing but conſcious integrity could inſpire. Fully aſſured that, wherever he goes, he ſhall carry his own virtue, and his own happineſs, along with him; — rejoicing in the perſuaſion "that he hath choſen that good part which cannot be taken away from him;"—poſſeſſed of an humble hope, that his Almighty Maker will be his Everlaſting Friend; he can "walk through the valley of the ſhadow of death, and fear no evil." — Such are the ſupports and conſolations which virtue affords, at the ſeaſon when all things elſe muſt fail! In ſuch peace may the good man die!

"For Conſcience, like a faithful friend,
"Shall through the gloomy vale attend,
"And cheer his dying breath;
"Shall, when all other comforts ceaſe,
"Like a kind angel, whiſper peace,
"And ſmooth the bed of death."

After

After this view of the ſuperior excellence and importance of Virtue, in compariſon with every thing elſe which is valued and deſired among men; can you, my brethren, entertain a doubt, whether it deſerves to be conſidered as the *one thing needful?* Can you heſitate a moment in determining to purſue it as your chief good? — Diſcourage not yourſelves with an apprehenſion, that this purſuit will interrupt your attention to others, of an inferior nature. You may employ your ſkill and induſtry to increaſe your poſſeſſions; you may enjoy every pleaſure which providence hath placed within your reach. Only remember, that your integrity and virtue are infinitely more valuable than every thing elſe; and let not the proſpect of indulgence or profit ever tempt you to forſake the paths of innocence. Let every other purſuit, and every other care, be in ſubordination to this. Let your deliberate purpoſe be, "Till I die I will not remove

my

my integrity from me; my righteouſneſs I will hold faſt, and will not let it go; my heart ſhall not reproach me ſo long as I live." In the midſt of all the concerns and all the pleaſures of life, adhere ſteadfaſtly to this reſolution. Whatever portion of external good may fall to your lot, ſtill ſeek your chief happineſs in a conſciouſneſs of upright intentions and a virtuous behaviour. While you enjoy the good things of life, preſerve your minds ſuperior to, and, as much as poſſible, independent of them all. Place your confidence, not in the uncertain poſſeſſions, and tranſient pleaſures of the world, but in your own uprightneſs and integrity, and in the goodneſs of your Maker. You will then find, that your hope reſts upon a ſure foundation, and will never make you aſhamed. You will then be like unto "a wiſe man, who built his houſe upon a rock: and the rain deſcended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon

that

that houſe ; and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock."

" Hear, then, the concluſion of the whole matter; Fear GOD, and keep his commandments ; for this is the WHOLE of man."